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## Why has violence come to dominate images of PNG elections? The 2002 elections in the Highlands Region

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# **Why has violence come to dominate images of PNG elections?**

**The 2002 elections in the Highlands region**

**Krisztina Matefy, BA**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the award of**

**Bachelor of Arts Honours (Politics and  
Government)**

**in the Faculty of Education and Arts, Edith Cowan University**

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## USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the problem of election-related violence through a number of meta-theories, which have recently emerged in the social sciences to explain intra-state conflicts. By using the case study of the 2002 elections in the Highlands region of Papua New Guinea (PNG), this thesis examines the applicability and usefulness of primordialism, modernization theory and weak state theory in explaining election-related violence in PNG.

Critically examining the theories, the thesis analyses a wide range of information about the historical, cultural, social and political factors that played a significant role in the surfacing of election-related violence in the PNG Highlands. By highlighting the dynamics between these various aspects, the thesis argues that none of the existing theories has the capacity to fully conceptualize election-related violence in PNG.

## Declaration

*I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:*

- i. incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;*
- ii. contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or*
- iii. contain any defamatory material.*

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## Table of Contents

<i>Use of thesis</i> .....	ii
<i>Abstract</i> .....	iii
<i>Declaration</i> .....	iv
<i>Acknowledgements</i> .....	v
<i>Glossary</i> .....	viii
<i>Maps</i> .....	ix
<i>Introduction</i> .....	1
<i>Chapter One: History of warfare</i> .....	12
<i>Chapter Two: Sociological explanations of election-related violence</i> .....	24
<i>Chapter three: An examination of the political aspects of violence</i> .....	44
<i>Conclusion</i> .....	64
<i>References</i> .....	71
<i>Appendix A - Seats won by party endorsed candidates, 2002</i> .....	82
<i>Appendix B - Endorsed winning candidates by political party in the Highlands</i> .....	83
<i>Appendix C - Coalition governments since 1972</i> .....	84
<i>Appendix D - Census, common roll and vote analysis by province</i> .....	85
<i>Appendix E - Comparison of the 1997 and 2002 vote in the Highlands</i> .....	86

## **Glossary**

AusAID – Australian Agency for International Development

CPC – Constitutional Planning Committee

EDF – Electoral Development Funds

EHP – Eastern Highlands Province

FPTP – First Past The Post electoral system

FSI – Failed States Index

LPV – Limited Preferential Voting

MP – Member of Parliament

OLIPPAC – Organic Law on the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates

OLPLLG – Organic Law on Provincial and Local-Level Governments

OPV – Optional Preferential Voting

PNG – Papua New Guinea

PNGDF – Papua New Guinea Defence Force

PNGEC – Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission

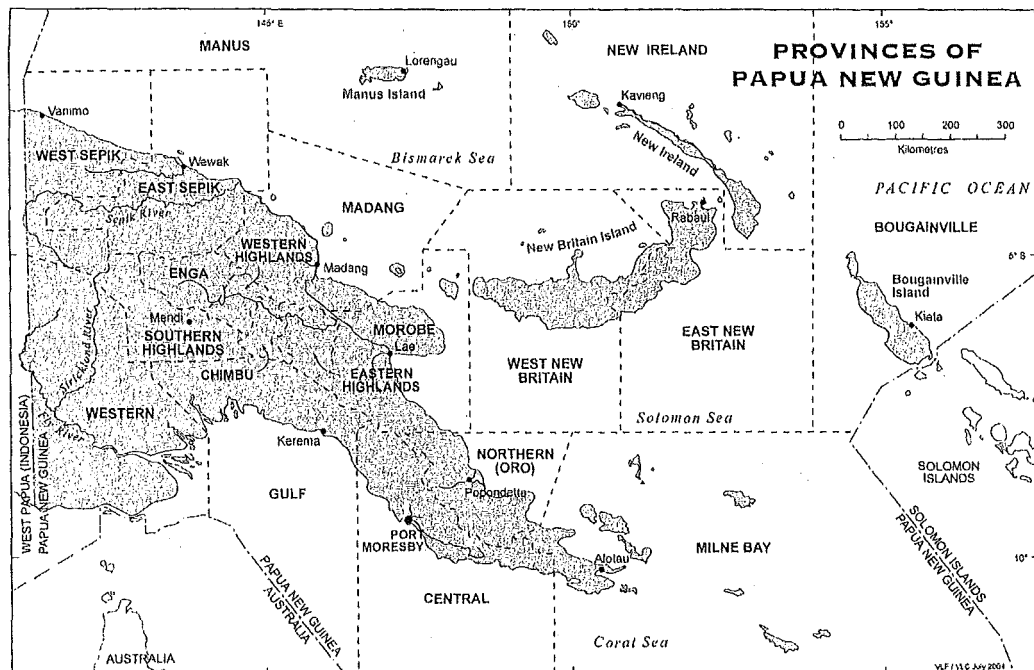
RPNGC – Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary

SHP – Southern Highlands Province

WHP – Western Highlands Province

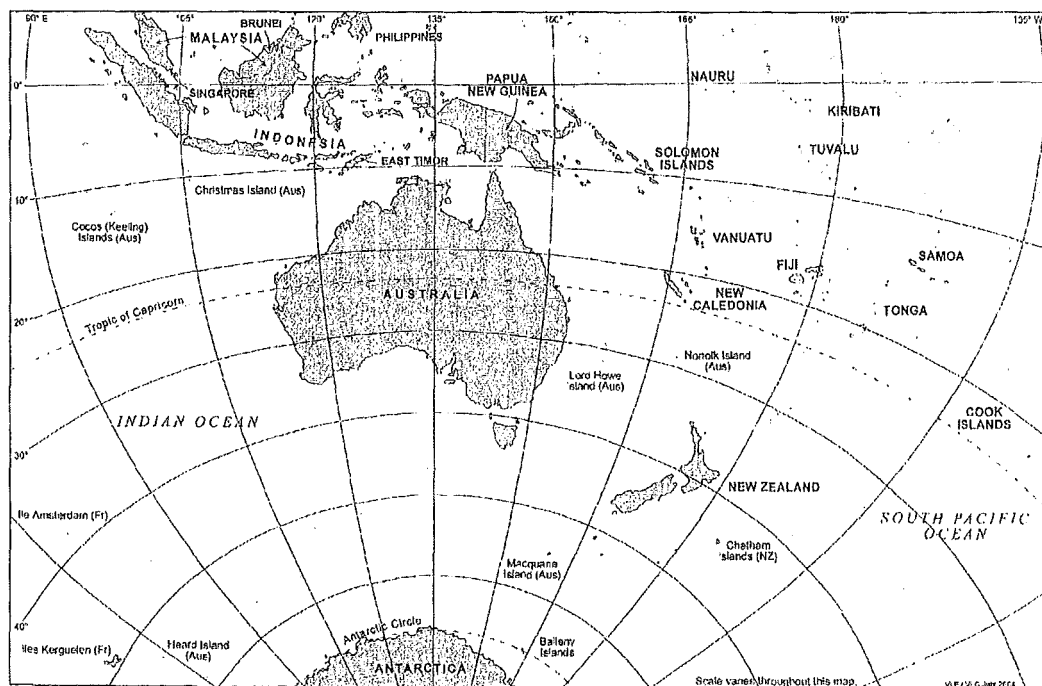
## Maps

### Provinces of Papua New Guinea



Source: May (2006a).

### Australia and its region



Source: Rumley, Forbes & Griffin (2006).

## Introduction

On 16 September 1975, Papua New Guinea (PNG) became an independent sovereign nation. It was within the 'third wave of democratisation'<sup>1</sup> (Huntington, 1991, p 24) that PNG, a former Australian colony, made a transition from a set of hitherto acephalous (literally means headless) tribal societies towards a modernising state governed by the principles of democracy. With the new constitution, which was drafted by the Constitutional Planning Committee (CPC), PNG adapted a Westminster-style parliamentary system with a unicameral parliament; 109 members from 89 Open electorates and 20 Regional electorates (nineteen provinces and the National Capital District) are elected for five-year terms by universal suffrage. National elections have been held since 1964<sup>2</sup>; the last election was held in 2002 (Reilly, 1999, p 226; May, 2003a, p 2; Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2007, online).

Papua New Guinea represents one of the few post-colonial developing nations that has maintained an unbroken record of democratic government since its independence. It has held regular elections on schedule with a relatively high level of participation and candidature. Changes of government have been peaceful and have followed constitutional procedures. The judiciary has maintained its

---

<sup>1</sup> The American and French Revolutions provided the impetus for the first democratic wave (1828-1926) that ended shortly after World War I. The second wave (1943-1962) was precipitated by the struggle against fascism during World War II and the collapse of European colonialism in Africa and Asia. The transition of former communist countries and Third World countries towards democratic governance initiated the third wave of democratisation (1974- ) that is still underway (Huntington, 1991, pp 16-26; Handelman, 2003, pp 32-33).

<sup>2</sup> During the colonial rule national elections were held for the House of Assembly in 1964, 1968 and 1972, which led to formal self-government in 1973 and independence in 1975 (May, 2004, p 129-132; Standish, 1994, p 57).

independence. There has been no military coup and there is a vibrant free press (May, 2006a, p 151; Reilly, 2002a, p 703).

Yet, despite these conventional indicators of democratic longevity that may suggest political stability, the state of PNG not only remains weak, but it also faces serious challenges as its political institutions have increasingly become vulnerable to non-democratic pressures, including frequent turnover of governments and national elections characterised by political unrest (May, 2003a, p 1). Contrary to the opinion of some scholars<sup>3</sup>, who tend to equate PNG's unbroken record of democratic government with a democratic success, others suggest that political development in PNG has resulted in 'political decay' owing to a downward trend in maintaining democracy and its principles (Gelu, 2003, p 4). One of the most obvious manifestations of 'political decay' is the conduct of national elections. Recent general elections have been marred by an increasing level of violence and procedural malpractices. Election-related violence, which some see as an 'accepted and necessary evil' of the political process (Ketan, 2000, p 44, 48), raises the question about the prospects for the continuing health and stability of democracy.

Election-related violence can be broadly defined as 'any acts of violence that are intended to, or result in influencing electoral choices and electoral outcomes' (O'Grady, Lopez-Pintor & Stevens, 2007, online). Fisher (2002, online) provides a more specific definition. He defines election-related violence as "any random or

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<sup>3</sup> Reilly (1999, p 225) argues that "on many indicators of democratic performance, PNG is one of the most successful democracies in the developing world". Similarly, Diamond (cited in Reilly, 2002a, p 704) claims that Papua New Guinea's "remarkably vibrant and resilient democratic system" is "the most successful democracy of any of the 'Asian' developing countries".

organised act that seeks to determine, delay, or otherwise influence an electoral process through threat, verbal intimidation, hate speech, disinformation, physical assault, forced “protection”, blackmail, destruction of property, or assassination”.

Election-related violence in PNG, notably in the Highlands region, has become a growing problem of order that challenges state authority and it represents a major impediment towards consolidating democracy. Over the decades, elections have become an arena of intense political competition not only for power, prestige, and status, but also for the benefits of modernity offered by the state (May, 2006a, p 164). Individual candidates and their supporters often engage in violent clashes and resort to illegal practices in an effort to influence the electoral choices of voters and the outcome of elections in their favour, but also as a way to express their grievances.

In the PNG Highlands, three types of election-related violence have been identified: conflict occurs during campaigning, polling and post elections. Pre-polling violence includes any form of violent act, ranging from abusive verbal exchanges to destruction of property and lives. Polling violence is partly the result of the logistical disorganisation of elections and electoral malpractice by the state, but much of the violence relates to interference with ballot boxes, and intimidation of both voters and electoral officers by candidates and their supporters. Post-polling conflicts are characterised by fighting between supporters of rival candidates and retributive violence, occasionally leading to full-scale inter-group warfare (Dinnen, 2001, pp 162-169; Ketan, 2004, pp 284-288).

Although election-related violence became apparent during the 1980s (Strathern, 1993a, p 48), since the 1992 national elections it has intensified to such level that there seems to be a tendency in scholarly discourse to talk of 'gun-point democracy' (Standish, 1996), 'non-liberal democracy' (Gelu, 2000) and 'disorderly democracy' (May, 2003a). In 1997, the Electoral Commission (PNGEC) reported that "the 1997 election was the most violent ever" (cited in Gelu, 2000, p 106). Yet, worse was to come. In 2001, John Paska, PNG Trades Union Congress general secretary, said "the general belief is that the 2002 election will bear witness to a degree of volatility never before experienced in PNG" (*National*, 14 June 2001). As Paska predicted, the 2002 national elections turned out to be the 'worst and darkest' in PNG's short democratic history (*Post-Courier*, 02 August 2002). Although fighting was reported nationwide, election-related violence became the most disturbing phenomenon in the five Highlands provinces: Southern Highlands Province (SHP), Enga, Chimbu, Western Highlands Province (WHP) and Eastern Highlands Province (EHP)<sup>4</sup>.

Threats, intimidation, violence, hijacking and destruction of ballot boxes and hostage taking were characteristics of the 2002 Highlands elections. In Enga province thirty armed men stormed the Wabag police station and dynamited ballot boxes destroying thousands of ballot papers (*Post-Courier*, 12 July 2002, p 3; 'Tanim', 2003). In WHP a group of candidates made a plea to the Governor-General to stop the poll before it sunk into a civil war (*Post-Courier*, 20 June 2002, p 1). Chimbu province was declared a 'fighting zone' (*National*, 28 June 2002, p 1), followed by SHP where elections had been so chaotic that for the first

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<sup>4</sup> See map on p. ix. Other areas such as Lae and Port Moresby also experienced some cases of violence, although not to the extent as the Highlands.

time in the nation's history the Electoral Commission failed the elections in six electorates<sup>5</sup> and the PNG Defence Force (PNGDF) had to be called out in an effort to restore law and order (*National*, 10 July 2002, p 1; *Post-Courier*, 10 July 2002, p 1). The 2002 national elections in the Highlands, which by and large were controlled under the barrel of the gun, claimed a number of casualties. Although there are no exact figures, Standish (2003, p 143) estimates that the 2002 elections in the Highlands claimed as many as 100 lives.

The snapshot of the 2002 national elections in the Highlands outlined above is to be understood as part of a broader problem that confronts the PNG state. The structural changes in PNG's administration and legal reforms during the colonial era were inadequate and perhaps inappropriate as a means to 'modernise' Highlands societies, which were governed by deep-rooted traditional values that are many thousands of years old. Despite the imposition of a Western model of democracy, PNG remains characterised by a parochial political culture that is largely driven by traditionalism. Clan solidarity and political patronage, sometimes bordering on "kleptocracy" (Ketan, 2000, p 53), overrides all other aspects of politics. What has emerged is a weak state that lacks legitimacy and power to penetrate society, and the consequential lack of capacity to deliver goods and services to the people. The manifestation of a weak state is economic decline and societal malfunctioning that poses considerable challenges for the stability of PNG.

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<sup>5</sup> The electorates concerned were Kagua-Erave Open, Tari Open, Komo-Magarima Open, Imbonggu Open, Koroba-Lake Kopiago Open and Southern Highlands Provincial (Nonggorr, 2006, pp 7-8).



Documenting the extent of this challenge has proved elusive. However, the Fund for Peace, an international research and educational organisation, has recently produced an annual Failed States Index (FSI). The purpose of the FSI is to assess countries against a set of indicators and determine whether or not they are failed states. According to the Fund for Peace (2007, online), PNG scores high (84.6 out of 120 points) on the FSI of 2006. This relatively high indicator of state failure demonstrates that the PNG state is weak and it may have the potential to become a failing or failed state (Tulkiewicz, 2006).

Internal conflict has been identified as one of the main reasons why nation-states fail (Rotberg, 2003, p 1). Internal conflict that takes the form of tribal and clan clashes are frequent in PNG and intensify during election times. Such internal conflicts pose a great threat to PNG's already fragile stability. Therefore, understanding the underlying causes of election-related conflict is crucial to prevent PNG from deteriorating further. This is especially the case since, throughout the 1990s, Western foreign policy makers have increasingly become preoccupied with state-building assistance to their non-Western counterparts in an effort to avoid potential threats posed by weak and failing states<sup>6</sup>. Concerns about security and development now predominantly focus on the central role of the state and its ability to provide effective economic, social and political management (Chandler, 2006, pp 2-5).

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<sup>6</sup>Failing and failed states are generally acknowledged as posing severe security threats as they are widely perceived as being the source of many of the world's most serious problems, from poverty to AIDS to drugs to terrorism (Krasner & Pascual, 2005, p. 153; Fukuyama, 2004, p ix).

Such a role has posed a significant challenge for Australia because PNG occupies the crest of Australia's immediate north and east region which is described, albeit contentiously, as an "emergent arc of instability"<sup>7</sup> (Rumley, Forbes & Griffin, 2006, p 1). Given its geographical proximity<sup>8</sup>, the country's stability is important for Australia as well as the South Pacific region. In order to prevent PNG from becoming a failed state, Australia provides PNG with approximately \$300 million in aid each year (AusAID, 2000, p 7). Aid programs focus on two main areas, accelerating economic growth and fostering functioning and effective states (AusAID, 2006, p 34, 42). Deteriorating law and order, however, has generally been recognised as a major economic and social development constraint (AusAID, 2003a, pp 11-12; Chand, 2003, online; World Bank, 2004, p 26; Morris & Stewart, 2005, online). For the aid programs to be effective, it is important to address and understand law and order problems, of which tribal conflict is a major part.

The purpose of this honours thesis is to explore and analyse the broader problems that underlie election-related violence in PNG. To do so, this thesis will attempt to conceptualise election-related violence by using the 2002 Highlands election as a case study. Owing to the complexity of the problem, a coherent analysis requires a multi-theoretical approach with the capacity to examine both sociological and political aspects of violence and the ways in which these aspects intertwine.

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<sup>7</sup> Rumley (2006, pp 17-18) contests the term "arc of instability". He argues that the concept, which now appears in government reports and has been made popular by the media, is an overgeneralisation and perhaps an exaggeration. He argues that the concept of "arc" is both an unhealthy metaphor and an artificial construct because countries located in Australia's immediate region are not equally unstable. Furthermore, he argues that "vulnerability" rather than "instability" is a more appropriate expression.

<sup>8</sup> See map on p, ix.

Despite the fact that election-related violence is increasingly becoming a global occurrence, especially in developing nations<sup>9</sup>, an integrated theoretical perspective has yet to be fully advanced within the social sciences to comprehensively explain it. Consequently, the analytical framework of this thesis is built upon two theories, ethnic conflict and weak state theory. The study of four prominent social scientists, Clifford Geertz, Robert H. Bates, Donald L. Horowitz and Robert I. Rotberg, provides the basis of a multi-disciplinary and integrated explanation of election-related violence.

Although, as the case study of PNG will show, these two theories occasionally overlap, for the purpose of this thesis they will be applied separately. Whereas ethnic conflict theory is used to explain the sociological aspects of violence, weak state theory provides a template for establishing a link between institutional deficiencies of the state and election-related violence. Although some scholars use the term 'ethnic conflict' in relation to PNG<sup>10</sup>, it is important to note that election-related violence is not necessarily ethnic group conflict<sup>11</sup>. Nevertheless, in the absence of an alternative theory specific to PNG, ethnic conflict theory seems the most appropriate sociological perspective.

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<sup>9</sup> Among countries scheduled for elections in 2002, 19 have experienced previous election violence: The Gambia, Republic of Congo, Cambodia, Colombia, Zimbabwe, Chad, Armenia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Pakistan, Georgia, Haiti, Albania, Guinea, Macedonia, Madagascar, and Ukraine (Fisher, 2002, online). This list, however, does not include Papua New Guinea, which indicates that there are potentially more countries marred by conflict during elections.

<sup>10</sup> See Reilly (2000) 'Democracy, ethnic fragmentation, and internal conflict'.

<sup>11</sup> Inter-group conflict in the Highlands occurs between candidates' support bases. Standish (2007, pp 139-140) notes that often the vote bases of many candidates share a common culture and language; hence they cannot be regarded as separate ethnic groups.

Ethnic conflict theory is a relatively new area within the social sciences that emerged in the post-World War II era<sup>12</sup>. Ethnic conflict theory is, in fact, a mega theory that draws extensively on existing perspectives of ethnic phenomena. These existing theoretical perspectives include primordialism, modernisation, class analysis and cultural pluralism (Horowitz, 2000, p 96; Conteh-Morgan, 2004, p 197). The lack of well-established social classes in PNG, especially the apparent lack of the middle class, renders the task of analysing election-related violence in terms of the economic interest of various social classes difficult. Similarly, cultural pluralism cannot be applied to the analysis because Highlands' societies do not exhibit wide cultural differences, as their value and belief patterns conform to the broad Melanesian culture. Therefore, this thesis will only use two aspects of ethnic conflict theory, primordialism and modernisation. These will be combined with weak state theory to analyse the 2002 national elections in the PNG Highlands.

The thesis is built from a variety of resources that include both primary and secondary research materials. Secondary resources are used when examining theoretical explanations and the socio-political, historical and cultural background of PNG. Secondary resources include books and journal articles. Originally, the impetus of this thesis was set by the book titled 'Australia's arc of instability: The political and cultural dynamics of regional security' (2006) co-edited by Dennis Rumley, Vivian Louis Forbes and Christopher Griffin. Some notable authors

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<sup>12</sup> The post-World War II period, particularly the ending of the Cold War era has witnessed a dramatic shift in the nature of warfare. This shift was marked by the decline in interstate conflicts and dramatic increase in conflicts within the state, which now make up more than 95 per cent of all conflicts mostly in developing countries (Human Security Report, 2005, online). These intrastate conflicts have come to be labelled as 'ethnic conflicts', which refers to inter-group conflicts within the state.

whose work has shaped this thesis include Bill Standish, Sinclair Dinnen, Ron J. May and Ben Reilly, who are all experts on various aspects of PNG.

Primary resources are used when referring to the 2002 national elections. Primary resource materials include newspaper articles, published and unpublished government reports. The newspaper articles, which were published in PNG in the year of the election 2002, were compiled from three PNG newspapers, *The National*, *The Post-Courier* and *The Independent*. Copies of *The Post-Courier* were obtained from the National Library of Australia (Canberra). Copies of *The National* and *The Independent* were kindly lent by Dr Bill Standish.

A comprehensive analysis of election-related violence requires a sound understanding of PNG culture. As argued by Yin (2003, p 59) researchers need to have a firm grasp about the issues being studied to be able to correctly collect and analyse relevant data. Chabal and Daloz (2006, p 11) observe that political actions are often influenced by cultural factors such as custom, values and beliefs indicating the importance of taking cultural variables into account when examining politics. It is also believed that “violence is understood best when it is examined over a range of cultural settings, and in a full variety of social institutions” (Riches, 1986, p vii). In an attempt to provide a comprehensive study of election-related violence this thesis will also incorporate many insights made available by Anthropology.

The main problem to be examined in the thesis is:

- To what extent can election-related violence in PNG be explained by using aspects of ethnic conflict theory and weak state theory?

This problem will be approached through a set of four research questions:

- 1) What is the extent of conflict as a source of political violence?
- 2) To what extent can primordialism and modernisation explain the prevalence of election violence?
- 3) How does the weak capacity of the PNG state contribute to election-related violence?
- 4) How does the case study of the 2002 national elections in the Highlands contribute to an understanding of the need for a synthesis of sociological, anthropological and political theories?

This thesis is organised according to a linear-analytic structure, which is a standard approach recommended for theses (Yin, 2003, pp. 152-153). This thesis is divided into this introduction, three chapters, and a conclusion. The first chapter provides a brief historical overview of tribal warfare and the way fighting has translated into modern politics in the form of election-related violence. By using the 2002 national election in the Highlands as a case study, sociological and political aspects of election-related violence placed in a theoretical framework will be examined in chapters two and three respectively. Findings and recommendations in relation to the theories will be presented in the conclusion.

## Chapter One: History of warfare

“Fighting has always been here. It’s part of our life. Heh, heh.  
Enga custom! It’s a part of our life.  
...it won’t end. Fighting won’t end.  
Why? Because we are born with it. And we will die with it. It’s our  
custom.”

(Cited in Dorney, 2002, p 121)

Ethnographic accounts have demonstrated that tribal warfare, an important sphere of competition, has long been present in the PNG Highlands. Whereas tribal fighting in traditional society was the outcome of disputes that predominantly centred on the oft-cited trio of land, women and pigs, in modern society it has increasingly become associated with state institutions such as elections. Elections have become a new arena of competition whereby local groups or group of individuals often engage in destructive military practices as a means to succeed or exact revenge for defeat. Election-related violence, as one manifestation of modern warfare is, in fact, an altered continuation of traditional practices.

To understand the circumstances from which election-related violence has emerged, this chapter presents a brief historical overview of tribal warfare. The chapter starts by explaining some essential information on the structure of society and traditional leadership. It then provides a discussion on pre-colonial tribal warfare, the resurgence of fighting at the end of the colonial era and its causes, and the emergence of a new leadership and arena of competition brought about by colonialism and modernisation.

The Highlands provinces comprised of loosely structured and acephalous (stateless) societies characterised by a segmentary structure<sup>13</sup>, in which individuals belong to progressively more inclusively named groups. According to their size, the following social groupings can be distinguished: phratry, tribe, clan, sub-clan, sub-sub-clan and lineages (Ketan, 1996, p 243). Tribes are the most coherent and autonomous social and political formations that occupy or claim a certain territory (Royal Anthropological Institute, 1951, p 66). Tribes can be subdivided into clans and can form a phratry with a tradition of common descent. In certain areas, for example in Mount Hagen (WHP), tribes are the main political, ceremonial and military units (Ketan, 1996, p 247). These functions, however, are transferred to the clan level if the tribes are too big, as it is the case in Chimbu where tribal groupings can number up to 5,000 people (Standish, 1992, p 28). Clans are the fundamental social formations in which membership is usually acquired through unilineal and patrilineal descent, although there are cases when membership is based on cognatic descent<sup>14</sup> (Standish, 1992, pp 27-28; Ketan, 1996, p 244). Ideally, clans are exogamous (people marry from outside the group), but in certain areas, for example, in the Eastern Highlands, endogamy (marriage within the group) is largely accepted and practiced (Feil, 1987, pp 75-76).

Although pre-colonial societies had no overarching central authority or any form of 'state', certain individuals of high prominence were bestowed with political and social leadership roles. These men came to be known as 'big men'. The 'big men'

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<sup>13</sup> As opposed to a hierarchical political structure, segmentary political structures are characterised by the principle of equality. Different segments at each level of society are equal and correspond to one another (Eriksen, 2001, pp 163-164).

<sup>14</sup> Generally speaking descent in the Highlands is agnatic (father-to-son). Whereas in patrilineal descent system transmission of membership takes place through the male line, in cognatic systems kin group membership can be acquired through both mother's and father's side (Eriksen, 2001, p 97).



theory was first put forward by Marshall Sahlins (1963), who contrasted a self-made 'big men' leadership in Melanesia with that of inherited chieftainship in Polynesia. Sahlins identified a big man with a bourgeois entrepreneur, who could manipulate his followers as well as wealth to obtain social credit and prestige. Sahlins's typology of big man was essentially based on meritocratic attributes. He argued that the power of a big man was personal power that rested with him as a person rather than with the position. Big man status was attained through individual actions and skills such as magical powers, exceptional rhetorical skills, fighting ability, generosity and loyalty (Sahlins, 1963, pp 206-208).

Sahlins's 'big man' model has received some criticism. In an influential paper, Standish (1978), for example argued that in pre-colonial times not only meritocratic factors but also a 'hereditary advantage' played a significant role in attaining a leadership status (Standish, 1978, p 33). Such reconsideration suggests that the position of a big man is not acquired solely through his personal actions as proposed by Sahlins. Nevertheless, it is argued that leadership was more usually achieved than inherited (Dinnen & Thompson, 2004, p 2).

Additionally, Sahlins's model assessed leadership positions against a generalised set of formula. However, research conducted in various areas points to different types of leaders. In Western Highlands, big men were those who excelled in economic transactions in ceremonial exchanges, possessed good financial standing and great rhetorical skills and were generous (Ketan, 2004, pp 71-72). In contrast, in the Eastern Highlands, where ceremonial exchanges were given less emphasis and where tribal hostility permeated society, big men were aggressive

warriors (Feil, 1987, p 65). Among the Maring (Madang), big men were wealth transactors and shamans, who possessed esoteric knowledge concerning fighting (Rappaport, 1984, p 29). Therefore, it can be argued that traditional leadership varied according to certain social customs and practices adopted in different areas.

Life in traditional Highlands' societies was to a large extent characterised by intense competition and co-operation between groups. An important arena of these corporate activities was warfare. Government records and missionary recollections from early colonial encounters indicate a great level of belligerence between groups that constantly engaged in warfare with the destruction of lives and property (Standish, 1992, p 34). From the late 1950s ethnographers began conducting research on New Guinea Highlands warfare (Knauff, 1990, pp 265-266). The reconstructive accounts made available by anthropologists substantiate Andrew Strathern's claim (1977, p 135) that prior to the Australian administration, warfare was so endemic in the PNG Highlands region that in fact it was an expected part of a people's life.

Early explanation of warfare has been made from a functional ecological viewpoint. Mervyn Meggitt (1977), who conducted his research among the Mae Enga, produced a classic study in relation to the social formations that entail warfare. Meggitt distinguished four different types of fighting, warfare between phratries, intraclan fighting, fighting between clans of one phratry and warfare between clans of different phratries<sup>15</sup>. The intensity of fighting was regulated by agnation. Intraclan fighting (between 'brothers') operated under strong constraints

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<sup>15</sup> A phratry is a loose social organisation above the tribal level, and refers to an alliance of tribes. Ketan (2004, p 107) calls these groupings "coalition-style alliances", which are based on military alliances. They started to form in the early 1970s to achieve specific goals.

in an effort to prevent total warfare, but combat between clans of different phratries (with increased segmentary distance between disputants) was unrestrained, and consequently could result in all-out warfare (Meggitt, 1977, pp 16-43). Meggitt argued (1977, pp 10-14) that it was primarily the combination of high population density and land shortage that prompted groups to fight. Violence in this sense was a means to acquire land through eviction, but also a means to protect a group's patrimonial estate.

The ecological perspective of warfare had, however, soon become a subject of criticism. An empirical critique of land shortage explanations was compiled by Paul Sillitoe (1977). By using available census data for some regions and informants' statements collected by ethnographers, Sillitoe concluded that in majority of the cases disputes between members of different political groups rather than land shortage was the underlying cause of war. Sillitoe substantiated his claim with findings which revealed that victors often did not occupy their enemy's land due to fear of the latter's ancestor spirits. Sometimes, victors invited their defeated counterparts back to occupy their homeland. Additionally, he argued that persistent warfare occurred in areas of moderate population density and abundant land supply (Sillitoe, 1977, pp 71-79).

While Sillitoe did not rule out the acquisition of land as an aim of warfare, he shifted the argument by pointing to disputes between different parties as the immediate cause of fighting. Although he did not specify, later research revealed that in traditional times it was the oft-cited trio of land, pigs and women (wealth items) over which disputes predominantly arose (McLeod, 2002, p 155; Yala, 2002, p 7). Disputes could be settled in peaceful and violent ways, both regarded

as a legitimate response to grievances. Traditional methods of dispute settlement subscribe to what McLeod (2002, p 143) calls a “sliding scale of justice”. These include negotiation, mediation, violent self-help, compensation, payback and warfare. In PNG, compensation is the most popular method of addressing a grievance with the primary purpose being restitution and reconciliation. If compensation, which almost always preceded warfare, failed to alleviate grievances, disputes escalated to tribal war (McLeod, 2002, pp 150, 155). Besides unsuccessful dispute settlements, other factors such as the pride and dignity of the group, the affirmation of male identity and the social history of group enmity also played a significant role in resolving conflicts through violence (Standish, 1992, p 112; Ketan, 2004, p 160; McLeod, 2002, p 160).

Australian colonial governance did, at least for a period of time, successfully change the atmosphere of hostility by suppressing tribal fighting. The Highlands region was first explored in the early 1930s and its pacification started after 1945 (Strathern, 1993a, p 42). The establishment of law and order became the colonial Administration’s number one priority. Initially, pacification had achieved its desired effect as statistical data revealed a decrease in warfare (Gordon & Meggitt, 1985, p 162). Several factors contributed to the fact that tribal fighting became less frequent during the 1950s and 1960s. The belief that the newcomers were ancestral spirits or “Sky People” (Strathern, 1977, p 137; Gordon & Meggitt, 1985, p 163) made white people superior, but it was rather the understanding of the power of firearms and a desire for European objects that aided pacification. In addition, there was a strong tendency among certain local groups towards active

and willing cooperation in the establishment of peace (Gordon & Meggitt, 1985, p 164; Standish, 1992, p 38).

However, pacification did not last for a long time, as the 1970s witnessed a resurgence of warfare. Tribal fighting reappeared in all five Highlands provinces and became especially widespread in Chimbu, Western Highlands and Enga (Strathern, 1977, p 135). The scale of fighting, believed to be greater than in pre-colonial times (Strathern, 1977, p 136), prompted the government to appoint Phillip Paney to commission an inquiry to investigate tribal warfare in the Highlands. By distinguishing between long-term and short-term causes of fighting, the Paney report (1973) gave multiple reasons for the revival of warfare. Among the immediate causes leading to fight were land, sorcery, killings, women and pigs. Long-term determinants included kin-group loyalty and 'the need to fight' as a result of social, economic and political uncertainties that imposed pressure and created anxiety in the communities. However, the report emphasised that the prime cause of increased lawlessness in the Highlands was the ineffectiveness of introduced judicial and administrative procedures dealing with disputes (Paney Report, 1973, pp 4-18).

As the Paney report implied, the social, economic and political changes brought about by colonialism had altered traditional life in ways, which had consequences for conflicts. Contact with Europeans resulted in a population increase due to medical services, improvements in diet and possibly aspects of mission influence. The increase in population contributed to demographic pressures as local groups grew and land shortage became apparent. Land shortage was further intensified by

the introduction of cash cropping. Increasing pressure on resources became associated with heightened intergroup tension. Disputes over the ownership and use of resources, in particular land and pigs, became frequent and were further aggravated by the legalisation of liquor sale (Strathern, 1977, pp 140-143; Meggitt, 1977, pp 162-163).

On the legal front, the introduction of a formal legal system staffed with poorly trained and educated indigenous magistrates during the 1960s meant rigid and lengthy procedures, which often produced dissatisfactory outcomes for disputants (Gordon & Meggitt, 1985, pp 76-82). Additionally, legal processes adapted from Australia did not take local customs and sanctions into consideration when handing down decisions. The question of compensation, which was usually Highlanders' most pressing requirement for settling disputes, was largely ignored (Paney Report, 1973, p 6; Standish, 1973, p 15). As a result of an ineffective judicial system, villagers preferred to resort to their traditional way of handling disputes by returning to violence.

Besides the shortcomings of the legal system, inadequate police presence was also a contributory factor in the revival and spread of violence. The Paney report (1973, p 19) stressed that in rural areas the force was dangerously understaffed. Similarly to the legal field, the police were also short of experienced and trained officers and they lacked the basic equipment necessary for field operations (Standish, 1973, p 14). Additionally, there was a lack of co-operation and

consultation between the police and the Division of District Administration services<sup>16</sup>, which further hindered effective operation (Paney Report, 1973, p 19).

While institutional weaknesses in state structures facilitated the resurgence of tribal warfare, the adoption of firearms as technological innovations in the mid-1980s have further intensified, and at the same time dramatically altered the nature of fighting, especially in terms of the rules of engagement (Ketan, 2004, p 178). In pre-colonial times the primary tools of warfare were bows and arrows, spears and axes. Today, fights are fought with a range of lethal weapons including home-made guns, pistols, rifles and high-powered military weapons (McLeod, 2002, p 156). Whereas traditional tribal fighting was spectacular, required logistic planning and was played-out in prepared positions on pre-arranged battlefields according to certain constraints, contemporary warfare has become characterised by raids and ambushes whereby combatants engage in indiscriminate killings (Gordon & Meggitt, 1985, pp 153-154; Ketan, 2004, pp 182-183). The inevitable result of such shift in warfare practices is a high number of fatalities and injuries and a considerable destruction of property. Between 1988 and 1996 tribal warfare in Enga province claimed more than 300 lives. The estimated death toll from recent fighting in the Southern Highlands is also believed to be in the hundreds (Dinnen & Thompson, 2004, p 7).

Another significant factor that has widened the scale of conflict was the imposition of a Western political system grafted onto a highly competitive Highlands political culture. While traditional causes of conflict remained intact,

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<sup>16</sup> Australian colonial control was based on the work of the Division of District Administration, which came under indigenous control in 1973 (Standish, 1973, p 12).

new causes of conflict were propelled by contemporary politics (Yala, 2000, p 7). Political reforms initiated by the Australian administration served as the first steps towards democratisation. In the 1960s and 1970s, the establishment of state institutions, local government councils, provincial government and the national government, opened another arena of competition. The newly established national and provincial electorates encompassed many politically autonomous and competitive clans in single representational units. During the years, elections have become increasingly associated with warfare, as these groups came into competition over issues, such as funds for economic development, which are channelled through the new political system. The government came to be seen as a “king of super clan” (Gordon & Meggitt, 1985, p 182).

Just as the introduction of guns had shaped the nature of fighting, elections also impacted on the nature of warfare. Intensified competition during elections has gradually begun breaking down group unity. Whereas co-operation between alliances of clans and tribes was vital in pre-colonial times, clans of the same tribe came to oppose each other during elections (Ketan, 2004, p 158). For example, Strathern (1993b, 227) notes a considerable drift in the alliance between the Minembi and Kombukla tribes (Western Highlands) during the 1993 by-elections. The Minembi always helped its traditional ally the Kombukla to elect its member, consequently expected reciprocity. During the 1993 by-election, however, the Kombukla refused to support the new Minembi candidate, which angered the Minembi tribesmen such that they threatened to make war against them. Not only have traditional military alliances started drifting apart, but also the increasing number of candidates contesting elections has stimulated intra-clan fighting.



Moreover, the new political system contributed to the emergence of a new type of leadership. Whereas traditional big manship was earned through honour and reputation based on performance, modern leadership roles are gained either through working for or in government. Today, money and guns are the two significant factors that dominate the struggle for modern leadership. The “primacy of politics” (Dinnen, 2001, p 170) has created a perception that substantial wealth can be generated from being a politician. In return for the dispersal of state resources, all politicians receive support and power from their respective tribes and clans. In an effort to get their members elected, groups readily resort to the use of firearms, which are supplied by those with political ambitions. As Gibbs (2004, p 13) notes “We are witnessing new kinds of tribalism with a new type of leader who has access to guns and the ability to open or obstruct access to money and resources”. These factors make politics a major source of conflict and violence.

The imposition of a Western democratic model onto a traditional tribal society generated a process whereby the ‘modern’ and the ‘traditional’ merged. Election-related violence, in effect, is another dimension of warfare that reflects the continuity of traditional competitions. It is the product of and a response to the forces of decolonisation and modernisation that brought along social and political development, subsequently transforming historically entrenched tribal fighting into a modern day warfare that intensifies during and after elections. It is the intensification of electoral competition that provides the setting for election-related violence that reached its height during the 2002 national elections. As this chapter has demonstrated there is interplay between the traditional forms of

cultural and political violence. Accordingly, the analysis of election-related violence demands both sociological and political approaches, which are discussed in the following two chapters.

## Chapter Two: Sociological explanations of election-related violence

“SHP (Southern Highlands Province) people have gone mad”, said the opinion page of *The National* (18 July 2002, p 8) referring to the extraordinary levels of violence and disruption that eventually led to ‘failed elections’ being declared in six of the nine electorates. Following the call for fresh elections in the Southern Highlands (*Post-Courier*, 2 August 2002, p 2), a group of ‘angry community leaders’ wrote a letter to Prime Minister, Sir Michael Somare. The content of the letter (signed by all six leading candidates):

“I’m giving the Somare-led government until 4.06pm tomorrow (today) to declare the remaining seats...If we don’t have a reply by 4.06 (close of business) tomorrow, then the Southern Highlanders will be a republic country...More people will die. Roads will be blocked, more bridges will be blown up...There would be “unimaginable bloodshed”...Each tribe is armed to the teeth with all the modern military style weapons...We’re bringing the nation to its knees.”

(*Post-Courier*, 9 August 2002, p 2)

While the SHP provides an extreme example, it is an illustration of the tense atmosphere that prevailed throughout the highlands provinces during the 2002 national elections.

A comprehensive analysis of violence within the electoral context requires the examination of both sociological and political aspects of conflictual relationships. The analytical focus of this chapter centres on the sociological explanations of violence, which are divided into two contending views: primordialism and modernisation. Whereas the primordial approach is based on emotive theories of conflict and the psychological sources of identity, modernisation theories provide a rational choice analysis (Conteh-Morgan, 2004, pp 197-199). To establish the extent to which violence during elections in the PNG Highlands reflects these

differing views, this chapter uses the study of three prominent social scientists, Clifford Geertz, Robert Bates and Donald Horowitz, as the basis of the analysis.

Table 1: Summary of the argument of major theorists

Primordialism	Modernisation	
<p>By emphasising the strength and non-rational character of social ties, the primordial approach explains why people are so strongly attached to their ethnic groups.</p> <p>It focuses on the psychological sources of identity, which motivate group solidarity and violence.</p> <p>In-group versus out-group orientation: whereas intra-group relationships are marked by favouritism, inter-group relationships demonstrate hostility and discrimination.</p> <p><b>Geertz:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethnic identities are given and flow from cultural identities.</li> <li>• The formation of civil state strengthens primordial sentiments.</li> <li>• The primacy of group solidarity in public affairs.</li> <li>• Conflict results from inter-group competitions for relative group worth.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Early modernisation theory</b></p> <p>Regarded the process of modernisation as an 'evolutionary progression', which was believed to transform small-scale solitary societies into large-scale and impersonal societies.</p> <p>Modernisation would result in the emergence of new social strata.</p> <p>The most 'detrified' strata, educated elites in particular, would lead people away from ethnic affiliations.</p> <p>Fading traditionalism would eventually lead to the end of ethnic competition, hence the disappearance of ethnic conflict.</p>	<p><b>Later modernisation theory</b></p> <p>By focusing on economic motives, it provides a rational analysis of ethnic group behaviour; why and how people can be galvanised into actions.</p> <p>Explains conflict in material terms. Conflict results from the rational pursuit of the benefits of the modern state.</p> <p><b>Bates:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethnic identities are not constant. They are responsive to innovations and revitalisation.</li> <li>• Ethnic groups compete for the benefits generated by modernity.</li> <li>• In their pursuit for power, elites organise competitive groupings, which take ethnic form.</li> <li>• Groups follow if their demands for material rewards are satisfied by elites.</li> </ul>
Criticism	Criticism	Criticism
<p><b>Bates:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It treats ethnic identities natural and constant.</li> <li>• Whilst primordialism is useful in explaining the persistence of ethnic identities, it does not provide an adequate discussion of the role of political and economic factors in shaping ethnic identities.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Bates:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The process of modernisation promotes ethnic groups formations. Ethnic competition endures as modernisation proceeds.</li> </ul> <p><b>Horowitz:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethnic affiliations remain strong in modernising societies.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Horowitz:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The undue focus on the role of elite ambitions results in insufficient attention to the conflict motives of non-elites.</li> <li>• It does not explain why conflict occurs in less modernised countries.</li> <li>• The realm of feelings, rather than material interests, provides a complete explanation of conflict motives of both elites and non-elites.</li> <li>• Inter-group competition is driven by the desire to obtain positive social identity.</li> </ul>

Primordialism emphasises the strength and non-rational character of certain social ties (Freeman, 1998, p 19). Clifford Geertz first proposed the application of primordialism to post-colonial states<sup>17</sup>. Geertz (1963, pp 109, 112-113) regarded a primordial attachment as one that derived from cultural 'givens' (blood, language, region, religion and custom). The 'givens', which were rooted in the non-rational foundation of personality, provided the basis of group solidarity. Communities based on primordial allegiances were characterised by a 'corporate sentiment of oneness', which had a deeply abiding strength in the post-colonial state (Geertz, 1963, p 114). Geertz asserted that for many people in modernising societies, this 'corporate feeling of oneness' remained a legitimate authority and much of the interest in public affairs took the form of an obsessive concern with the relationship to one's tribe, region or sect. Geertz argued that it was the formation of a civil state that stimulated primordial sentiments because it introduced a more efficient mechanism for the production of power, which is generated by and associated with modern political institutions, into society over which various primordial groups fight (Geertz, 1963, pp 109-121). Geertz's analysis implies that conflict in modernising societies arises from competition for relative group worth, as to permit oneself to be ruled by other tribes is to submit to oppression and degradation (Geertz, 1963, p 127).

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<sup>17</sup> The concept of primordialism was introduced in 1957 by American sociologist, Edward Shils, who differentiated between societies based on individualism and rationalism and societies characterised by communal solidarity. He argued that people had a 'primordial' attachment, which involved strong emotional ties that arose from socialisation and a basic sociocultural need for a sense of identity and belonging. Such attachments were to be found in families, primary groups and tribal societies (Van Krieken, Smith, Habibis, McDonald, Haralambos & Holborn, 2000, p 519; Freeman, 1998, p 19).

The primordial approach has attracted a number of critics, particularly from those theorists who established a link between modernisation and ethnicity.

Modernisation theorists challenge the primordial approach for treating ethnic identities as constant and ancient, ignoring the fact that they might respond to innovations and revitalisation. They see identity as malleable and circumstantial and also take exception to the tendency to underemphasize the role of elite manipulation (Bates, 1983, p 166; Freeman, 1998, pp 19-20; Conteh-Morgan, 2004, p 198)<sup>18</sup>. As opposed to the primordial approach, modernisation theorists have sought to develop rational explanations of conflict. A number of strands can be identified within modernisation theory.

Early modernisation theorists regarded ethnic allegiance as a historical anachronism doomed to disappear due to the forces of modernisation<sup>19</sup>. These sociologists equated modernisation with an “evolutionary progression” transforming small and solitary communities into large and impersonal societies (Freeman, 1998, p 17). They put forward the concept of ‘detribalisation’, by which they meant that in the wake of urbanisation and industrialisation the emerging new social strata, the elite, would lead people away from kinship affiliations (Horowitz, 2000, p 97). Essentially, it was an optimistic approach as ‘detribalisation’ asserted the disappearance of ethnicity, consequently putting an end to inter-group fighting.

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<sup>18</sup> Geertz’s analysis does not differentiate between the elite and non-elite in the modernising state. By arguing that identities were not fluid and shapeless, but clearly demarcated, and ‘the network of primordial alliances and opposition’ was the product of centuries of gradual crystallisation, Geertz had a tendency to treat identities as static (Geertz, 1963, pp 118-119).

<sup>19</sup> See Gupta (1978, p 34), who argued that tribalism, an impediment to modernisation, would be “gradually and cautiously eroded” by economic and political development.

A later modernisation theorist, Robert Bates, refuted the idea that ethnic competition would disappear and instead he argued, “ethnic groups persist largely because of their capacity to extract goods and services from the modern sector and thereby satisfy the demands of their members” (Bates, 1983, p 161). Whilst Bates accepted Geertz’s argument about the persistence of primordial sentiments, he did not believe in emotive explanations of conflict. According to Bates, conflict between groups derives above all from the competition over the benefits of modernisation, power and control over the distribution and allocation of resources. Bates argued that in the competition for power, elites manipulated ethnic identities in order to generate the support of their groups. Bates, however, did not explain conflict solely in terms of elite aspirations, but also of communal aspirations. He argued that groups placed considerable social pressure on elites, as they only provided their support as long as their demands for the benefits of modern state was satisfied by their elected member (Bates, 1983, pp 161-166). This perspective provides a different view from those of earlier theorists. In contrast to early modernisation theorists, later modernisation theory emphasised the importance of ethnic groups in modernising societies. In contrast to the primordial approach, this approach sought to explain conflict in material terms.

Based on the range of existing theories, Donald Horowitz, a prominent political scientist, developed a paradigm of ethnic conflict. By examining theories of modernisation, Horowitz (2000, pp 102-105) concludes that modernisation theory is insufficient in explaining how ethnic diversity relates to political instability. Horowitz’s criticism of modernisation theory is threefold. Firstly, he argues that contrary to the predictions of early optimists ethnic affiliations remain strong

(Horowitz, 2000, p 97). Secondly, Horowitz (2000, p 102) argues that modernisation theory unduly focuses on the role of modern elite ambitions, hence ignoring the conflict motives of non-elites. Thirdly, Horowitz (2000, pp 102-103) claims that the theory does not provide a convincing explanation as to why conflict occurs in the least modernised parts of the world. Whereas modernisation theorists focus on the economic motives in explaining conflict, Horowitz, along with Geertz, places more emphasis on self-affirmation. Horowitz (2000, p 146) asserts that inter-group competition is driven by a group drive to obtain positive social identity by competition and comparison with other groups. It is the fear of being dominated or suppressed that provides the rationale for group hostility (Horowitz, 2000, p 179).

A brief examination of these theoretical foundations of conflict reveals a lack of consensus in the field of social sciences as to what exactly ignites conflict. Whilst these theories have strong potential to highlight certain aspects of conflict motives, none of them is powerful enough to provide a comprehensive explanation of conflict on its own. The examination of conflict in PNG Highlands where kinship affiliations and group solidarity are still prominent features of social existence, and where groups engage in volatile conflicts in order to gain access to the benefits of the modern state, cannot be confined to one approach; it requires a multi-layered sociological explanation. Consequently, PNG election violence has lacked a comprehensive theoretical analysis. In an attempt to conceptualise election violence, this chapter will examine the applicability and usefulness of the primordial approach and modernisation theories.



PNG was colonised by Great Britain and Germany in 1884. While Australia took over the responsibility of British Administration in 1906, and that of the German part in 1914 (Dorney, 1990, pp 38-39), given its geographical remoteness, the Highlands region was the last to be explored by the Australian Administration in the early 1930s. In fact, the PNG Highlands was the last contacted large tribal population on earth (Knauff, 1990, p 265). From the mid 1940s onwards Highlanders had experienced a dramatic pace of change and political and economic development driven first by cash cropping and plantation economy and later by the establishment of political institutions. Political education of people about Western democracy started in the late 1950s. Although the first local government councils in the Highlands were established in the 1960s, state institutions have been fully in place only since PNG gained independence in 1975 (Gordon & Meggitt, 1985, pp 92-98; Strathern, 1993a, p 42).

As previously noted, early modernisation theorists predicted that social changes would bring about the demise of ethnic groupings. However, the introduction of Highlands' societies to the modern economy and western-style political system did not result in a "detrified" society (Horowitz, 2000, p 97). Instead of destroying "communal particularism" (Melson & Wolpe, 1971, p 2), social mobilization of the Highlands region has resulted in what Strathern (1993a, p 48) calls "the process of neotribalisation". Neotribalisation is a manifestation of modern politics in Melanesia which, in the absence of basic social divisions and a strong party system, is essentially based around personal and group identities (May, 2004, p 45).

The traditional fragmentation of Highlands' societies means that political activities at both local and national level have remained organised along traditional structural lines: clans and tribes ranging from 1,500 to 10,000 people (Ketan, 1996, p 249; Standish, 2007, p 140). As a consequence, elections are competitions between clans and sometimes tribes. Electoral behaviours subscribe to the 'parochial handout mentality model' (Saffu, 1996, p 4) as electors, especially in the Highlands, often cast their votes along clan lines (May, 2006b, p 108). Such voting behaviour reflects the imperative of clan loyalty. Most PNG people retain a primary attachment and loyalty to their clan or tribal group, a phenomenon known as *wantokism*<sup>20</sup> (Standish, 1994, p 60).

Whilst group solidarity and clan voting reflects Geertz' argument about primordial attachments in modernising societies, the concept of primordial has to be handled cautiously in the Highlands context. Geertz (1963, p 119) maintained that primordial alliances and oppositions were static, as they had been crystallised over centuries. In the Highlands, however, alliances are rather fluid, shifting in nature as they are created through military alliances, intermarriage and ceremonial exchanges. Ketan (2004, pp 255-261) calls these inter-group relations, which develop over the years with the primary purpose of being used during elections, 'the Hagen mega-cycle'<sup>21</sup>. What is important for the purpose of the analysis of primordial attachments is the extent of group solidarity and subjective aspects of a group-related feeling of identity.

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<sup>20</sup> *Wantok* means 'one talk', the Tokpisin world for people who speak the same language (Standish, 1994, p 60).

<sup>21</sup> Joseph Ketan, a Papua New Guinean anthropologist, has done his research in the Mount Hagen area in Western Highlands Province, hence the name of Hagen mega-cycle.

Local issues and identities have a primacy in Highlands politics. Group members take great pride in nominating one of their members as a candidate (Standish, 2007, p 141). According to Ketan (2004, p 130), the 'name-must-not-go-down' principle is of supreme importance in the composition, solidarity and continuity of Hagen groups. The significance of primordial factors is manifested through localised support for elections as mobilization is usually organised in the name of the group. The ideology of group solidarity is often expressed through bloc voting as an indicator of the 'corporate feeling of oneness' (Geertz, 1963, p 120) and also the often jealous protection of a candidate's base vote area.

Clans often deliver their votes en bloc in order to secure the candidacy of their big men (Standish, 1989, p 165), consequently enhancing their group's prestigious standing vis-à-vis other clans. Such corporate activity reflects the desire for relative group worth as argued by both Geertz (1963) and Horowitz (2000). Standish (2002, online) observed that during the 2002 national elections Chimbu people had presented over 90 per cent voting solidarity at ballot boxes<sup>22</sup>. One way of expressing group solidarity is calling out the candidate's name loudly. This way, voters prove their loyalty to the group by demonstrating that they vote according to the tribal deal ('Pigs and Politics', 2002; Gibbs, 2004, p 11). Another method of clan voting is known as 'turning the table'<sup>23</sup>, which means that the

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<sup>22</sup> This figure, however, does not necessarily reflect the genuine strength of clan solidarity as candidates often resort to coercive practices to secure their votes. This will be discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>23</sup> In Enga, turning the table has acquired the name '*tanim tebol*', a Tokpisin expression, which means that all votes go one way (AusAID, 2003b, p 21).

table, in fact, is turned over and all ballot papers are filled out for one candidate by his representative(s)<sup>24</sup> (AusAID, 2003b, p 21).

According to an AusAID (2003b, p 21) report, “detailed statements of facts” have emerged that during the 2002 national elections officials were often coerced into allowing the mass-marking of ballot papers. In WHP, for example, a presiding officer was forced by armed supporters of a candidate to drive to a secluded area where he was ordered to sign the ballot papers (*Post-Courier*, 21 June 2002, p 1). Although the hijacking of ballot papers and the intimidation of polling officials are violence against the state, they reflect the desperate desire of the group to enhance the chance for their candidate to win, as his election to parliament gives a superior status to the group. Violence in this sense can be interpreted as a means to achieve positive social identity (Horowitz, 2000).

There are occasions, however, when presiding officers readily approve the tampered ballot papers as authentic, as it was the case for one of the candidates in Sinasina-Yonggamugl Open seat<sup>25</sup> (Chimbu province) (ABC TV, ‘Foreign Correspondent’, 2002):

“....Okay...You guys relax and do your work.  
We are trying to send somebody to the National Parliament...  
Yes, Sir.  
However you do it...it doesn’t matter. Just do it!  
Thank you very much! Thank you, Boss.”

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<sup>24</sup> This was the case in Enga for the provincial election. The son of Peter Ipatas (sitting Governor) was mass-marking ballot papers in front of the camera (‘Tanim’, 2003).

<sup>25</sup> This conversation was recorded by human rights activist, Robyn Slarke, while supporters of Peter Iggy Kalale were mass-marking ballot papers with the encouragement of the presiding officer. Peter Iggy Kalale lost the election.

The mass-marking of ballot papers with the approval of the presiding officer occurs particularly when the official is a member of the clan. Such official behaviour reinforces Geertz's (1963) claim that kinship affiliations in modernising societies have primacy over the state.

Another aspect of primordialism expressed by block voting practices relates to the issue of territoriality, which has a psychological underpinning. To defend the group's territory from enemies means to defend the collective identity. In the Highlands, supporters and candidates are jealous and highly protective of their base-vote area from other candidates. In 2002, it was almost impossible and also dangerous for candidates to campaign in their rivals' base areas (Standish, 2002, online; 'Pigs and Politics', 2002). Groups set up roadblocks in an effort to prevent rival groups from poaching votes in their territory. Supporters of rival candidates often resort to fighting at roadblocks resulting in injuries, destruction of property, vehicles in particular, or occasionally destruction of lives. In SHP, one of the candidates, Peter O'Neill, and his supporters, numbering about 1,000, were attacked and stoned by about 300 supporters of a rival candidate. The attack resulted in 25 injuries and two vehicles being badly damaged (*National*, 11 June 2002, p 7).

Another form of deterrent tactic employed by traditional tribal enemies to protect their base-votes is the kidnapping of a rival candidate (Dinnen, 2001, p 162; Ketan, 2004, p 250). In 2002, such a hostage-taking saga was reported in Koroba-Lake Kapiago district (SHP) during the campaign period. Ben Peri, a Duna candidate, attempted to campaign with a police escort in the Huli-speaking

Koroba District, which was the base area of his rival, Herowa Agiwa<sup>26</sup>. During his campaign a gunfight broke out, one policeman was killed and two others injured. Ben Peri and another two policemen were taken hostage (*Post-Courier*, 20 May 2002, p 1). A few days after the kidnapping took place, the former sitting member of Koroba district, Herowa Agiwa, admitted that some of those holding the three hostages were his supporters (*Post-Courier*, 22 May 2002, p 1). Allegedly, it was Mr Agiwa who had arranged the hostage-taking (Haley, 2004, p 19).

The primordial approach assumes in-group cooperation and out-group hostility (Conteh-Morgan, 2004, p 199). In the Highlands, however, this dichotomy does not always hold strong. In keeping with the fluidity and shifting allegiances of Melanesian politics<sup>27</sup>, violence occurs not only between groups, but within groups as well. Standish (2007, p 141) argues that in the last decade group unity has been breaking down as more and more candidates stand, consequently splitting the tribe or even the clan base vote. Such splits contribute to serious fighting. In 2002, the polling for the Sambeoko clan at Par, where two candidates contested the Kombiam / Ambum Open seat (Enga), ended in the death of two men and a tribal fight that lasted four months after the elections claiming another 16 lives ('Tanim', 2003; Lakane & Gibbs, 2003, p 109; Gibbs, 2004, p 6). A similar incident occurred in Kundiawa (Chimbu) where a fight erupted between

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<sup>26</sup> Koroba-Lake Kapiago district is the home of four different ethnic groups, the Huli, the Duna, the Hewa and the Bogaia. The Koroba seat has been held by a Huli since 1982. Koroba, which is the Huli part of the district has always been more developed than Lake-Kapiago, the Duna speaking area. Disparities between different parts of the district are a source of discontent and explain the long-standing tension between the Duna and the Huli (Haley, 2004, p 16-17).

<sup>27</sup> As previously noted in this chapter (p 31), Highlands groups are fluid and shifting in nature. They are characterised as much by unity as by factionalism, which has always been part of traditional Melanesian politics. Tribes, and sometimes clans, form alliances, which are temporary and ad hoc. Groups within the alliance often co-operate in the drive to attain a specific goal. Whilst such co-operation bring along high level of unity within and between groups, group unity can be threatened by disruptive power struggles that exist between leaders of different factions (Ketan, 2004, p 108).

supporters of two candidates, both from the Kamanegu tribe. Many people had been killed and many had become refugees as the result of the conflict, which was still under way weeks after the elections (Dika, 2003, p 44-45). Modernisation in post-colonial societies strengthens primordial attachments, but at the same time it also has the potential for breaking down 'the corporate feeling of oneness'.

The importance of group identity, a sense of common solidarity and the attachment to a specific territory reinforce the prevalence and endurance of primordial attachments in post-colonial Highlands societies as argued by Geertz (1963). Similarly, efforts made to maximise votes are indicators of the group's desire to attain positive social identity as promoted by Horowitz (2000). However, political competition to gain access to the modern state also implies that conflict revolves around the desired components of modernity as much as they revolve around identity. Geertz's application of primordial attachments to post-colonial states draws no attention either to the material expectations of groups or to the role of elites<sup>28</sup> in the mobilization and manipulation of collective identities. These issues, which play an equally prominent role in the electoral context, provide the starting point of modernisation theory.

Clan mobilization of candidates, rather than party loyalties or policies, has been widely documented as one of the most established features of electoral strategies in the Highlands (Saffu, 1996; Standish, 1996; Dinnen, 2001; Morgan, 2005). The primary preoccupation of candidates during electioneering is to secure votes from

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<sup>28</sup> The term elite must be used fairly loosely in PNG, where leadership status is relatively permeable for men of ambition (Claxton, 2000, p 267).

their natal clan, in-laws and matrikin<sup>29</sup>. The importance of kin ties as the basis for the mobilization of electoral support as expressed by one of the candidates during the 2002 elections ('Pigs and politics', 2002):

"Up in the Highlands, we live in the tribal system – once your tribe is with you, that's it. It's not your political party or whatever. So that grouping that came across was not from my tribe, it's a different tribe. They got different blood. They have got their own candidate standing...."

(Peter Waieng, sitting member for Kundiawa)

Bates (1983, p 161) argued that in the competition for power and prestige, elites stimulate the formation of ethnic groups. The politics of patronage through distributive activities, called 'Big Man politics' ('Pigs and Politics', 2002) reflects Bates's argument. Distributive activities are the primary means for candidates to mobilise and secure their local base. Such activities involve providing access to state resources in the form of development funds, commonly known as 'slush-funds', projects as well as employment, education and travel to one's kin group (Morgan, 2005, p 4).

These distributive activities are part of the Melanesian tradition, which greatly influenced the ideology of contemporary politics. Despite the fact that patronage politics is played out with resources of the modern state, it is not a modern phenomenon. It has its origin in traditional Highlands societies. Traditional societies were predominantly redistributive societies governed by the principle of reciprocity (Gordon & Meggitt, 1985, p 156). Reciprocity is deeply embedded in Highlanders' cultural mores; a gift incurs an obligation to be repaid at a later

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<sup>29</sup> This observation was made by Standish (2002, online) in Chimbu province for candidates who campaigned for Open seats during the 2002 elections.



stage, simultaneously it opens a continuing exchange relationship (Standish, 1983, p 108).

As Dinnen points out (2001, p 175), electoral strategies employed by contemporary politicians bear similarities to those of Melanesian Big Men. Just as traditional big men secured popular approval of their power by establishing their monopoly over redistributive resources (Gordon & Meggitt, 1985, p 157), in contemporary societies, politicians convert their representative roles into one of patronage as a means of building prestige and engendering social debts from the electors.

As mentioned earlier, people often cast their votes along clan lines. While such corporate voting behaviour means a high level of group solidarity, it also indicates the groups' desire to gain the benefits of the modern state for their respective members. Whole clans promise their votes for one candidate, but in return for the votes delivered, elites are expected to distribute patronage in the form of schools, roads, electricity etc for their local power base ('Tanim', 2003). On the one hand, high material expectations of voters reinforce Bates's theory, which argued that groups placed considerable social pressure on their elites (Bates, 1983, p 162). On the other hand, they run counter to Horowitz's criticism (2000, p 104) of the assumption that non-elites follow if there is a pay-off.

Additionally, Bates (1983, p 162-163) argued that groups have the capacity to withdraw their elites' status if they fail to satisfy their demand for material resources. The high expectations from contemporary leaders, which again are

similar to those held by traditional big men (Dinnen, 2001, p 174), is reflected by the high turnover rate of Members of Parliament (MPs). MPs who do not deliver goods and services to their 'constituency' are not getting re-elected (Reilly, 2002b, p 25; Dorney, 2002, p 117-119)<sup>30</sup>. The high turnover of MPs substantiates Bates's argument about social pressure placed on elites. Moreover, it indicates that people follow their leaders if there is a pay-off, or to be more precise, they do not follow if there is no pay-off, hence the validity of modernisation theory as opposed to Horowitz' criticism of it.

Although Bates (1983, p 161) argued that "the main reason for conflicts is that in the competition for power, ethnic appeals are useful to politicians", he did not attribute conflicts solely to the aspiration of elites, but also to communal aspiration for the components of modernity (Bates, 1983, p 153). Communal aspiration is to be understood against the backdrop of social mobilization. Having been mobilized into the modern economy and polity, groups came to desire the benefits generated. They want to have more goods, more recognition and more power (Melson & Wolpe, 1971, p 5). However, the valued goods represented by modernity are scarce in proportion to the demand for them. The imbalance between demands and supply inevitably results in competition (Melson & Wolpe, 1971, p 6; Bates, 1983, p 153).

Political competition in the Highlands is intense as membership in Parliament provides access to sectoral allowances and funds. Although these funds are made

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<sup>30</sup> At each election over half the parliamentary members lose their seats. For example, during the 1997 election, only 55 incumbent politicians were able to retain their seats (May, 2002, p 13). In 2002, the number of MPs losing a seat reached its peak, the figure totalled an extraordinary 83 of 106 (Standish, 2003, p 146).

available for politicians for direct distribution in their electorates, in reality, they only serve two purposes. On the one hand, they are used for self-advancement. On the other hand, they are often politicised to shore up political support, to reward followers, and to secure votes for re-election (Dinnen, 1996, p 83; Stewart & Strathern, 2002, p 79). As a consequence, political competition is being reduced to a zero-sum game as only the politician and his local base enjoy the benefits of modernity. The remaining part of the electorate, however, has equal demand for goods and services, hence the fractionalisation between groups within the same electorate (Strathern, 1993a, p 46). The source of the conflict lies in the imbalance in the distribution of goods and services, which is the consequence of elites' ambition for power.

The imbalance in the distribution of modernity is a source of jealousy, frustration and anger for the remaining part of their electorates. Those who are left out may perceive themselves as being treated like "enemies" (Stewart & Strathern, 2002, p 79). During the 2002 elections, member of the Anglimp / South Waghi electorate (WHP), Kuk Kuli, was attacked by Minj people. It is alleged that Mr Kuli was attacked because he had only provided services for his own supporters, neglecting the rest of the district (*Post-Courier*, 16 April 2002, p 1)<sup>31</sup>. A few days later, Mr Kuli's supporters retaliated (*Post-courier*, 18 April 2002, p 2). Their attack indicates that the Minj people, in fact, were considered as enemy.

With respect to elite ambitions for power, Bates's theory explains that elites mobilise support of their ethnic groups. Bates, however, did not make any

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<sup>31</sup> MP Kuk Kuli later resigned in order to avoid tribunal charges for misappropriating K175,540 that belonged to the National Gaming Board (*Post-Courier*, 30 April 2002, p 2).

reference to the possibility that in the quest for power and prestige, the elite may or can resort to violence against its members, as was the case in the Highlands. Patronage politics discussed earlier is not the only strategy for soliciting electoral support. In their competition for “super-big-man status” (Ketan, 2004, p 244), many candidates resort to vote-buying practices, which can trigger retaliation, as well as to intimidation of voters. In these cases, violence is the product of elite ambitions directed at members of the group.

The “commoditization of voting process” (Strathern, 1993a, p 48) by giving out cash directly to the people became a widely used practice in all Highlands provinces during the 2002 elections<sup>32</sup>. Desperate candidates were prepared to go to the polling stations with hard cash in their hands to entice voters (*Independent*, 13 June 2002, p 2). It seemed that candidates were pursuing voters, rather than the reverse (*Post-Courier*, 19 June 2002, p 11).

Cash-for-votes also have its origins in traditional practices and it is also based on the principle of reciprocity. Whereas in traditional societies big men tried to outdo each other with the size of their pigs and gifts, in contemporary societies candidates try to outdo each other with cash in election campaigns (Ketan, 2004, p 244). Candidates “invest or gamble” (*Post-Courier*, 6 June 2002, p 5) a huge amount of money during campaigning in the hope that their ‘generosity’ will be reciprocated with votes. Practice, however, deviates from ideology, as individuals do not always support those candidates who have given out cash. The imbalance in reciprocity, when cash is not reciprocated with votes, contributes to various

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<sup>32</sup> ‘Vote-buying’ is not a new phenomenon. Standish documented the practice of “doing a little bit of bribery around and about” during the 1977 national elections in Chimbu province (1983, p 108-109).

forms of retribution such as murder, rape, injury to person and destruction of property by disgruntled and losing candidates and their supporters after polling (Ketan, 2004, p 246).

Another consequence of large sums of money distributed during campaigning is that some candidates seek to enforce the solidarity of their clan people. While group voting is a characteristic electoral behaviour in the Highlands, to measure the extent to which voting in solidarity is genuine seems to be difficult in an environment where voters are intimidated at gunpoint and coerced to vote according to 'the right way' (Standish, 1996, p 299-300). According to Singirok<sup>33</sup> (2005, p 2), during the 2002 elections both candidates and incumbents were prepared to use firearms as a means to harass, intimidate and threaten voters in order to secure their votes. Such electoral behaviour of candidates in the Highlands, especially in SHP, Enga and WHP, has resulted in what some call as "Afghanistan-type" elections (*Post-Courier*, 26 July 2002, pp 1-2) and also has contributed to the emergence of 'warlordism' (*National*, 2 July 2002, p 9; 'Foreign Correspondent', 2002).

In the electoral context, it is the combination of the two theoretical approaches that best explains inter-group conflicts in the Highlands. Whereas Geertz's argument about primordial attachment within the modernising state is useful in highlighting the importance of collective identity, Bates's theory provides powerful explanations as to why and how political competition can contribute to conflict between groups in the Highlands region. Additionally, it can be argued

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<sup>33</sup> Jerry Singirok is a retired Major-General and former commander of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force.

that Horowitz's criticism (2000, pp 102-103) of modernisation theories falls short. Bates did not explain conflict from an elitist perspective, but rather from the mixture of elite ambitions to power and communal desire to gain access to the benefits of the modern state. It is exactly this desire to extract goods and services from the state that partly explains election-related violence in the Highlands, which is one of the least developed regions in the world. Nonetheless, there are areas of election-related violence that neither of the theories can fully explain due to their strong focus on inter-group relations.

This chapter has demonstrated that sociological theories, primordialism and modernisation theory, have their strengths and shortcomings in explaining election-related violence in the Highlands societies. Conflicts in the Highlands region exhibit a number of features. They can be driven by sentiments or / and material expectations, but they can also be the outcome of institutional constraints. A comprehensive examination of election-related violence, therefore, requires the incorporation of the capacity of the state into the analysis.

### **Chapter three: An examination of the political aspects of violence**

Societies divided along ethnic cleavages tend to produce party systems that exacerbate conflict (Horowitz, 2000, p 291). Horowitz (2000, p 306) argues that ethnic parties and ethnic party systems are the building blocks of party politics in ethnically divided societies. Ethnic parties mobilize their support from an identifiable ethnic group and serve the interests of that group. Contrary to a broad based party system that aims to serve the public at large, ethnic parties only identify narrow group interest. In the competition for state power, ethnic groups seek to exclude other groups from power. Conflict results from the incompatibility of ethnic claims to power (Horowitz, 2000, pp 291-297).

In contrast to Horowitz's claim, conflict in PNG, which is the most ethnically fragmented society in the world (Reilly, 2000, p 163), does not result from the competition of ethnic groups for power. Ethnicity in PNG has not posed the divisive threat that it has in many developing countries. Although PNG's ethnic divisions may be a source of local conflicts, the extreme fragmentation of the country and the absence of any large ethnic group have meant that no ethnic or linguistic group is big enough to monopolise power at the national level (Reilly, 2000, p 178, May, 2003b, p 163). Additionally, the apparent weakness of PNG's party politics reflects the difficulty that parties face in organising a strong support base to achieve political aims.

These realities were demonstrated during the 2002 national elections. A week before the people of PNG went to the poll to cast their votes, Sir Mekere Morauta,

then Prime Minister, urged voters to choose candidates on their merits instead of their party affiliations (*National*, 7 June 2002, p 5). Sir Mekere said “parties have no blood, eyes and nose, forget the parties but the people in the party” (*Post-Courier*, 7 June 2002, p 4). Sir Mekere’s statement indicates that political parties in PNG matter little as a factor in choosing candidates.

Party politics in PNG bears little relationship to the classic Westminster two-party model, which is believed to be the cornerstone of democracy (Powell, 1982, p 7). Politics in PNG is characterised by a diffuse and fragmented party system. Never in PNG’s history was the party system as fragmented as it was in 2002, when a record-breaking 43 political parties registered for the national elections (*National*, 1 May 2002, p 7). Among the 24 parties that won seats in the national legislature (PNGEC, 2006, online), 12 parties are now representing the Highlands region<sup>34</sup>.

In addition to the high level of fragmentation of the party system, political parties in PNG are organisationally weak, lack a mass base and have no ideological affiliations<sup>35</sup> (May, 2004, pp 136-137; Reilly, 2002a, p 706). Contrary to Horowitz’s claim, parties in PNG do not function as representatives of a particular ethnic group<sup>36</sup>, but rather as “aggregative groupings” from which parliamentary coalitions are built (Reilly, 1999, p 231). Parliamentary coalitions are unstable owing to the inherent weakness of the PNG party system that up until 2002

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<sup>34</sup> See Appendix A and Appendix B for parties.

<sup>35</sup> The lack of ideological differences among the parties was apparent during the 2002 election campaigns. They all emphasised general themes such as the importance of economic development, delivery of government services, especially health and education, to rural areas, good governance and an end to corruption.

<sup>36</sup> The three biggest parties, National Alliance, People’s Democratic Movement and People’s Progress Party, that won seats in the legislature (Appendix A) endorsed candidates from almost all provinces (PNGEC, 2006, online; *Post-Courier*, 1 August 2002).



allowed for frequent ‘party-hopping’ or ‘yo-yo’ politics for opportunistic purposes (May, 2002, p 7)<sup>37</sup>. The constant shifting of parliamentary loyalties was strongly associated with frequent motions of no-confidence. Since independence, every government has been a coalition government, and until 2002 no government had served its full term<sup>38</sup> due to a no-confidence motion against residing governments.

A problem associated with the frequent use of a no-confidence vote is that it renders political life an ultimately hollow and unproductive exercise. On the one hand, the frequent use of no-confidence motions resulted in long adjournments of parliament; an effective way to avoid a no-confidence vote. On the other hand, it has created an atmosphere in which Prime Ministers are predominantly preoccupied with the arduous task of holding the coalition together and keeping members on side. The ‘wheeling and dealing’ of coalition politics has taken its toll on good governance. Successive governments have been unable to maintain long-term national policies, which in turn have contributed to a decline in the state’s capacity to serve the interest of its citizens (May, 2003b, pp 156-157, 164).

Shortcomings in the political system mirror the wider acknowledgement that PNG exhibits many of the signs of a weak state (Filer, 1992; Standish, 1994; Dinnen, 2001; Reilly, 2002a; May, 2003a; Morris & Stewart, 2005). Since independence, the state has lacked the capacity to deliver its policies and services to its citizens and has failed to maintain popular acceptance. As a consequence, the state now

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<sup>37</sup> Sir Mekere Morauta initiated the Organic Law on the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates (OLIPPAC). The purpose of the constitutional reform was “to develop and nurture a political culture in which intrinsic values of constitutional democracy are respected and maintained through strengthening political parties and stabilising the executive” (Baker, 2005, p 102). The law, which came into effect in 2002, incorporated provisions prohibiting party-hopping.

<sup>38</sup> The current Somare government will be the first to complete a full five-year term. See Appendix C for coalition governments since 1972.

lacks authority over society and maintains a low level of political legitimacy.

Dinnen (2001, p 178) argues that the limited institutional capacity and legitimacy of the state are deeply implicated in the growth of election-related violence. In the absence of strong parties that would have the capacity to mobilize followers into conflict, it seems to be more appropriate to examine the relationship between election-related violence and the weak capacity of PNG's state.

Robert Rotberg, a prominent political scientist, recently produced a book to examine how and why states decay and what can be done to prevent them from collapsing. Rotberg (2003) categorises strong, weak, failing and collapsed nation-states according to political, social and economic criteria. Rotberg (2003, pp 2-4) argues that it is the ability to deliver political goods to citizens that distinguishes strong states from weak states, and weak states from failed states. Political goods are those intangible and hard to quantify claims that provide the basis of social contract between people and the state. This social contract is at the core of state-society interactions. According to Rotberg (2003, p 3), there is a hierarchy of political goods. At the top of the hierarchy is the supply of human security, followed by the opportunity to participate freely in the political process and the availability of various social services.

The implications for the state's ability to deliver the above mentioned political goods for stability is real. Rotberg (2003, p 4) argues that strong states, which perform well across all categories, are "places of enviable peace and order". In contrast, weak states that show a mixed profile in their ability to provide the essential political goods usually harbour intergroup tensions. Failed states, in

which political goods are nearly non-existent, are to a large extent riddled with ongoing conflicts (Rotberg, 2003, pp 4-9). Although Rotberg acknowledges the relationship between the ability to provide political goods and political stability, he does not explain how the lack of the former contributes to conflict. By using Rotberg's hierarchy of political goods as a model, the aim of this chapter is to examine how the weakness of the 'bits of the state' (Filer, 1992, p 118), including the security forces, the Electoral Commission and provincial governments, contribute to election-related violence.

Rotberg argues that the most important component of political goods is human security. According to political theory, the state is irreplaceable in guaranteeing this security (Lambach, 2006, p 408). The most fundamental function of the state is to provide a secure environment for its citizens. In order to provide human security, a nation-state needs to protect its sovereignty from outside intervention, ensure a secure domestic climate free from attacks on the state's social structure and the national order, to prevent crime, and to allow for its citizens to settle their disputes, whether it be with the state or with fellow citizens, without resorting to armed violence or other forms of physical coercion (Rotberg, 2003, p 3).

Whilst external factors do not pose a potential threat to PNG's security<sup>39</sup> due to the country's relatively benign security environment, conflicts within the country have greatly compromised stability. Elections, especially in the Highlands, are

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<sup>39</sup> Although problems have arisen in the past in three main areas: the border with Indonesia, the border with Solomon Islands and border violations by non-state actors (May, 2006a, p 155).

one of many dimensions of PNG's insecure domestic climate<sup>40</sup>, which provide a good illustration of the state's inability to ensure the security of its citizens. In all five Highlands provinces, the 2002 elections were characterised by the complete breakdown of law and order. Two factors in particular stand out, the state's failure to prevent the frequent use of illicit firearms by candidates and their supporters and the lack of effective security operations, which undermined the safety of many highlanders.

The 2002 elections in the Highlands claimed a number of lives in all provinces. In the Western Highlands, two men were killed in clashes between supporters, with dozens reported seriously injured (*Post-Courier*, 19 June 2002, pp 1-2). Two men were killed in the Eastern Highlands a few days after polling started (*Post-Courier*, 24 June 2002, p 3). In Chimbu province a ten-year old girl was shot dead in a fight between supporters of two candidates at one of the polling stations (*National*, 25 June 2002, p 3). Another fight between supporters in Kundiawa Gembogl (Chimbu) electorate claimed the life of three men (*Post-Courier*, 2 July 2002, p 3). Two men were reported killed in Enga on the 4<sup>th</sup> July (*National*, p 2). Just a week later a number of death in Enga rose to nine as election violence escalated between rival supporters (*Independent*, 11 July 2002, p 7). Four people were shot and chopped up in broad daylight in the Southern Highlands (*Post-Courier*, 11 July 2002, p 3). Just a few days after polling started, the *Post-Courier* (2 July 2002, p 3) reported that the number of casualties in the Highlands had reached 13, with many more injured in election-related violence. Overall, it is estimated that approximately 100 people lost their lives in election-related warfare

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<sup>40</sup> Other factors, such as tribal fighting, raskolism, gender violence and white-collar crime, also contribute to instability (Claxton, 2000, p 263; Dinnen & Thompson, 2004, p 2; May, 2006, p 158).

in the Highlands (Standish, 2003, p 11), which is a clear indication of the absence of human security.

As the examples show, most of the incidents involved firearms. The use of guns in clan warfare started in 1985 with shotguns in the Western Highlands (Ketan, 2004, p 181). The first firearm-related death in tribal fighting was reported in 1987 in the Southern Highlands. Following the 1992 elections, politicians began to deliver high-powered, military-style rifles to their tribesmen (Alper, 2005, p 35; Standish, 1994, pp 57, 65). According to Singirok, the strength of tribes today is measured by the number of weapons they have (*Post-Courier*, 12 September 2002, p 11). By supplying guns during clan warfare, politicians fulfil their obligations towards their *wantoks*, who, as ordinary citizens, cannot afford to pay the high costs of weapons and ammunitions. At the same time, “guns buy votes” (Strathern, 1993a, p 47). By supporting their kin group, politicians not only gain status, but also solicit political support.

In the 2002 elections in the Highlands, members of the political elite were deeply implicated in the supply of illicit guns. Sir Mekere Morauta said “it was an open secret” that guns were freely smuggled by politicians (*Post-Courier*, 24 May 2002, p 2). He also admitted that members of his own People’s Democratic Party were involved in smuggling operations (Dinnen & Thompson, 2004, p 10).

Reports from the Highlands revealed that during the 2002 elections “leaders in high places” purchased a lot of high-powered weapons and circulated them to their supporters and tribesmen (*Post-Courier*, 18 July 2002, p 2). It was also recognised that politicians themselves stockpiled a range of firearms including

AK47s, M16, M202, SLR and .303s to “keep a look out on individuals and supporters of other candidates” (*Post-Courier*, 14 June 2002, p 3).

The use of illegal firearms to threaten, intimidate and even kill people by candidates and their supporting tribes and clans means that national security had reached a critical point. The presence of illicit high-powered guns and the persistence of tribal warfare, which greatly intensifies during elections, are indicators of state weakness. As noted by Rotberg (2003, p 3), the prime task of the state is to ensure a secure environment for its citizens to live. To do that, the state must implement and enforce legislations that deter criminal behaviour.

In PNG, many serious criminal cases are being acquitted for lack of proper prosecution and / or the assumed lack of evidence. Whilst PNG has legislation for the control of firearms (the Firearms Act 1988), this legislation is hardly ever enforced. The conviction rate for firearm offences and related crimes is too low, and penalties are often too lenient. Additionally, crimes by leaders and electoral candidates are often condoned by state authorities (PNG Guns Control Committee, 2005, pp 4, 27; Singirok, 2005, p 9).

Unless the state takes appropriate measures to effectively penalise indictable offences, there is a great danger that violence during elections will further intensify. Given the high incentives for winning an election, especially in the Highlands, and the low likelihood of prosecution for illegal behaviour, candidates will continue to use a variety of means, often illegal, to win. Hence the

transformation of big-men syndrome into warlord syndrome (PNG Guns Control Committee, 2005, p 22).

Section 197 of the Constitution (PNG, 2006, online) states that “The primary functions of the Police Force are, in accordance with the Constitutional Laws and Acts of the Parliament- (a) to preserve peace and good order in the country; and (b) to maintain and, as necessary, enforce the law in an impartial and objective manner.” Accordingly, to protect the voters and ensure they exercise their constitutional rights free of any form of interference is the responsibility of the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary (RPNGC), the official name of the national police. Despite intentions to deal “swiftly and assertively” with those who resort to unlawful and violent tactics during the elections (*Post-Courier*, 24 April 2002, p 5), in many cases the police were unable to prevent widespread intimidation, fraud and violence in the Highlands.

The Electoral Commission (PNGEC) (2003, p 79) reported that police security at polling booths was insufficient, occasionally non-existent. Standish (2003, p 143) argues that ideally there should have been at least six police at each polling place in the Highlands<sup>41</sup>. The fact that many polling booths were operating without police presence meant that in many instances both voters and polling officials were left at the mercy of candidates and their supporters, many of whom controlled and took the law into their hands.

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<sup>41</sup> Some senior officers believed that squads of 20 well-armed men would have been needed to provide adequate security (AusAID, 2003b, p 18).

Despite rapid population growth, the police force, which currently has approximately 5,000 sworn officers, has not grown significantly over the last 30 years (Dinnen, McLeod & Peake, 2006, p 89). At the 2000 Census, PNG had a population of 5.2 million people (May, 2006a, p 152). This means that the ratio of police to population was 1:1040, which fell far below of the UN recommendation, which is 1:450 (Human Rights Watch, 2007, online). Although there are no official figures of the number of policemen posted to the Highlands, given the Highlands population, which according to the 2002 Census was nearly 2 million (*Post-Courier*, 2 August 2002, p 11), it is apparent that police were overextended by the need to secure many polling places at the same time. In fact, election-related deaths, violence and tension prompted the Police Commissioner, Joseph Kupo, to call for assistance from the Defence Force (PNGDF) to boost police manpower (*Independent*, 11 July 2002, p 6).

Major shortages of funding also impeded election security operations. Initially, the police budget was K25 million, which was then cut back to K19 million. Eventually, however, the funds made available for the police were only K10 million (AusAID, 2003b, p 16). Although the police had its own separate budget, due to shortages, some K4 million originally allocated to the PNGEC was transferred by the national government to fund the Defence Force role (*Post-Courier*, 11 June 2002, p 1). There were also administrative shortcomings that further worsened police operations. Chimbu police, for example, withdrew security at the counting centre in protest over non-payment of polling allowances (*Post-Courier*, 18 July 2002, p 4). Similarly, the Western Highlands plunged into chaos when frustrated policeman forced all counting in the province to a



standstill, as they did not receive their allowances (*Post-Courier*, 12 July 2002, p 1).

Whilst shortage of officials, funding and administrative problems contributed to a large extent as to why the police were unable to effectively perform their official duties during the elections, some elements of the security forces voluntarily chose not to be effective and not to protect the voters and the electoral process. Because of their partisanship and undisciplined behaviour during the 1997 elections, soldiers were confined to barracks during the 2002 elections (May, 2003b, p 160). Despite this, 12 serving soldiers and a number of dishonourably discharged soldiers, without permission from their commander, were seen assisting election candidates in the Highlands (*Post-Courier*, 4 July 2002, p 1). In WHP there were allegations that factions of the police force were allied either with Paias Wingti or with his direct rival Fr Robert Lak<sup>42</sup> (Standish, 2003, p 138). There were also accusations in the media of the police taking political sides in SHP and Enga (*Post-Courier*, 4 July 2002, p 3). Thus the presence of security forces, including both the police and the PNGDF, has been a controversial issue.

The next political good on Rotberg's hierarchy is the opportunity for citizens to freely, openly and fully participate in the political process of the state (Rotberg, 2003, p.3). This political good provides the basis of the legitimacy of the state (Patrick, 2006, p 29). To enable all eligible citizens the opportunity to play an active part in politics the state must meet two important conditions, an electoral roll of high integrity and an environment in which voters can cast their votes

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<sup>42</sup> Fr Rober Lak was the Provincial Member and Governor, who had defeated Wingti in 1997. Lak lost to Wingti during the 2002 elections (Standish, 2003, p 138; PNGEC, 2006, online).

without a sense of fear of intimidation (Commonwealth, 2002, p 11; O' Grady et al, 2007, online). The fact that during the 2002 elections in PNG neither of these conditions was met illustrates the weak capacities of the state.

Despite section 50 of the Constitution, which regulates that "every citizen who is of full capacity and has reached voting age...has the right and shall be given the opportunity to take part in the conduct of public affairs and to vote for elective public office at genuine, periodic, free elections" (PNG, 2006, online), many citizens of PNG were deprived of their basic human rights. Significant electoral maladministration and considerable security problems contributed to a large extent to the state's failure to satisfactorily conduct the 2002 national elections and also added significantly to tensions and the potential for conflict.

One major underlying problem was the difficulty of providing an accurate voter registration. In April 2002, the absence of an updated preliminary electoral roll for public examination prompted Prime Minister Sir Mekere Morauta to seek an interim court injunction to stop the issuing of writs (*Post-Courier*, 4 April 2002, p 1). The National Court, however, ruled that Sir Mekere's application was inconclusive and flawed with abnormalities and irregularities, therefore the notice of motion was incompetent. Justice Mark Sevua argued "The State cannot complain about the state of the Common Roll when, on the evidence of the Chief Electoral Commissioner, it (State) failed to allocate sufficient funding to update the Common Roll"(*Post-Courier*, 8 April 2002, p 1).

In fact, the major factor that impeded the Electoral Commission (PNGEC) to produce an updated roll was the state's failure to disburse the necessary funds in time. It was not until January 2002 that the PNGEC obtained the funds from the state (Standish, 2003, p 135), consequently the exercise of correcting the largely inaccurate 1997 roll started late<sup>43</sup> and could not be completed in a timely manner. When voting began in June 2002 it became apparent that the update of the roll, or the lack thereof, caused considerable problems nationwide with many names of voters either in the wrong electorates and wards or left out (*Post-Courier*, 5 June 2002, p 1)<sup>44</sup>. From 1992, peoples' names have to be on the roll in order for them to vote<sup>45</sup>. The Electoral Commission failed to process over a million claims for enrolment before the rolls were printed (Standish, 2003, p 135), which possibly meant that over a million people were prevented to cast their votes.

The failure to record many new names on the rolls is in sharp contrast with the Highlands experience. In the Highlands, in all five provinces, the electoral roll contained an enormously inflated number of electors (Standish, 2003, p 135). As a result, all provinces have recorded a vote more than 150% of the indicative census figure for eligible electors. In the case of Chimbu province, for example, the vote figure was as high as 285%<sup>46</sup>. Additionally, the number of votes cast in the Highlands provinces increased an average of 75.73% from the 1997 election<sup>47</sup>,

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<sup>43</sup> Following the 1997 national elections, the Parliament passed a motion for the PNGEC to use the 1997 National Election Common Roll for the 2002 elections (*Post-Courier*, 28 March 2002, p 22).

<sup>44</sup> Mostly in Port Moresby, Bougainville, Lae and in some urban areas (*Post-Courier*, 2 August 2002, p 11).

<sup>45</sup> In 1992, an amendment to the Organic Law on National Elections abolished 'Section 141' voting. Before 1991, people, whose names did not appear on the roll, were allowed to vote if they provided legal age and residential requirements (Dinnen, 2001, p 152).

<sup>46</sup> See Appendix D for the analysis of the 2002 Census and Common Roll by province.

<sup>47</sup> See Appendix E for the comparison of 1997 and 2002 vote in four Highlands provinces.

despite an average population growth rate of around 2.5% (May, 2006a, p 152)<sup>48</sup>.

This alarming increase demonstrates the escalation of electoral fraud in the form of multiple voting that was occurring in the Highlands.

In addition to the delay in funding to update the roll, funding for running the election was also reportedly provided late (AusAID, 2003b, p 23). Election managers expressed their concerns about the lack of financial capacity to transport ballot boxes to the districts (*Post-Courier*, 14 June 2002, p 1). As a consequence, in many Highlands' electorates polling started late. Polling in both Enga and SHP, for example, was scheduled for the 25<sup>th</sup> of June (*National*, 4 June 2002, p 8).

While polling in Enga did not start until the 28<sup>th</sup> of June (*National*, 28 June 2002, p 3), in SHP, it was delayed until the 05<sup>th</sup> of July (*Post-Courier*, 5 July 2002, p 2).

These changes in polling schedules resulted in the disenfranchisement of some electors as the PNGEC failed to provide adequate information about the new polling arrangements, consequently many people were absent at the time of actual polling (PNGEC, 2003, p 72).

Another factor that prevented many people to express their political will was the inadequate security of ballot boxes. Sometimes whole clans missed out on voting either because they never received ballot boxes as they had frequently been hijacked or because the ballot boxes containing their marked ballot papers were destroyed (Gibbs, 2004, pp 9-11). Several newspaper reports indicated that the police often watched helplessly and could do little about saving the ballot boxes.

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<sup>48</sup> It is more likely that the population growth rate for the Highlands is higher than the national average given that Southern Highlands and Eastern Highlands provinces were reported to have a population growth rate of 3.6%. Also, Western Highlands' population grew by 2.7% between 1990 and 2000 (*National*, 3 May, 2002, p 3).

Supporters of a candidate in Mount Hagen, for example, held up polling officials and policemen with firearms and walked off with numerous ballot boxes (*Post-Courier*, 19 June 2002, p 2). Similarly, in SHP, supporters overpowered the police and removed all ballot boxes containing 30,000 marked ballot papers (*Post-Courier*, 11 July 2002, p 3). In Enga province, 30 men armed with M-16s and Kalashnikovs raided the police station and dynamited one-third of the completed ballots. This time the police run away (*Post-Courier*, 12 July 2002, p 1; 'Pigs and Politics', 2002).

The fact that many people were unable to cast their votes either because their names were omitted or left off the roll or due to delays in polling contributed to considerable frustration and anger from parts of many electorates. Similarly, the hijacking and destruction of ballot boxes, which robbed many electors of their constitutional and universal rights, again resulted in anger. As one of the villagers, interviewed after the Enga incident, said "Everyone's not really happy, they're very, very angry now for this incident" ('Pigs and Politics', 2002). It can be argued that the state's failure to provide the opportunity for its citizens to participate in the political process raised the level of tension. It can also be assumed that the inflation of the roll in the Highlands contributed to violence. Inflating the roll is intentional; it is organised by candidates to increase their share of the vote (AusAID, 2003b, p 12; Standish, 2007, p 144). While 'rigging' the system facilitated multiple voting, in the absence of adequate security, it may also have provided the incentive to harass, intimidate and threaten voters to secure their votes and coerce polling officials to sign and to allow the mass-marking of all available ballot papers.

The last key political good on Rotberg's hierarchy relates to service delivery. The state is expected to supply essential goods and services to its citizenry. These include healthcare, education, physical and communicational infrastructure, and a beneficial fiscal environment in which citizens can pursue their economic interests (Rotberg, 2003, pp 3-4). Although section 2 (3) of the five 'National Goals and Directive Principles' included in the introduction to the Constitution (May, 2004, p 309) defines that "every effort to be made to achieve an equitable distribution of incomes and other benefits of development among individuals and throughout the various parts of the country" (PNG, 2006, online), many Papua New Guineans, especially those living in rural areas, are left without essential social services.

The breakdown of basic service delivery in rural areas has been widely acknowledged (National Economic and Fiscal Commission, 2003; Gibson & Rozelle, 2003; Morris & Stewart, 2005; Manning, 2005). The Highlands is one of the poorest regions in the country<sup>49</sup> with very poor infrastructure and poor access to health and educational services (Gibson & Rozelle, 2003, pp 165-167; World Bank, 2004, pp 14-17). In 2002, for example, Mendi High School (SHP) was closed because operational funds for the Provincial Education Office had not been received. Roads were in a terrible state of disrepair (*Post-Courier*, 10 May 2002, p 11). In the WHP, a measles outbreak claimed 51 children's lives because the Mount Hagen General Hospital lacked the necessary drug supplies, including antibiotics and intravenous fluids (*Post-Courier*, 1 May 2002, p 19). Similarly, the Kundiawa General Hospital (Chimbu) was in a critical state, as desperately needed drug supplies did not reach the hospital (*Post-Courier*, 1 May 2002, p 6).

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<sup>49</sup> The two most poverty-stricken regions in PNG are the Highlands and the Momase/North Coast region (Gibson and Rozelle, 2003, p 166).

Under the Organic Law, national functions such as defence and economic management are the responsibility of the National Government, while key areas of service delivery are the responsibility of provincial governments (Morris & Stewart, 2005, online). Provincial governments have been ineffective since the 1980s<sup>50</sup>. However, since the 1995 reform, which replaced the previous Organic Law on Provincial Government with the Organic Law on Provincial and Local-Level Governments (OLPLLG) (May, 2002, p 7), their capacities have deteriorated drastically (Standish, 2007, p 204). The ineffectiveness of provincial governments largely results from ill-organised and dysfunctional funding arrangements. The lack of transparency and accountability with regards to the allocation of funds has provided for entrenched corruption, which ultimately contributed to the further deterioration of service delivery and become debilitating to good governance.

The nominal primary purpose of the OLPLLG was to further decentralise power to local level governments by abolishing elected provincial assemblies. In effect, the reform re-centralised power by giving more influence to national Members of Parliament (MP), especially the Provincial Governors, over the allocation of district operation funds for government services, as well as the Electoral Development Funds (known as 'slush funds') for discretionary allocation. Additionally, MPs also have strong influence over staffing matters such as the appointment of senior officials (Standish, 2006, p 204).

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<sup>50</sup> Until the 1995 reform some 14 provincial governments had been suspended mostly for financial mismanagement, but also for maladministration, nepotism and favouritism (Regan, 1997, pp 49-51).

Between 1984 and 1999 MPs' discretionary funds grew from K10,000 to K1.5 million per annum. At the same time, basic operating funds provided by the national government for provinces have considerably declined (Standish, 2006, pp 204-205). Although provinces are lacking the means to deliver basic services, only a few MPs transfer their discretionary funds and other district support grants to local-level and provincial governments<sup>51</sup>. Due to the fact that discretionary funds are largely unaccountable, and their use is not transparent (Standish, 2006, p 205), MPs are more likely to spend their K1.5 million on rewarding themselves and their supporters rather than on much needed economic development projects in their electorates. Sir Peter Barter, Inter-Government Relation Manager, accused the administration of the Southern Highlands Province of being a kleptocracy – rule by thieves for thieves. He argued that governors, acting governors and administrators (often appointed by politicians) used public money that should have gone into better roads, health centres and schools (*Post-Courier*, 21 October 2002, p 1).

Dinnen (2001, p 179) argues that the diminishing capacity of government services is directly linked to political patronage. The public knows about the discretionary funds and they have high expectations from their MPs. National parliamentarians readily redirect state resources to members of their 'constituency' in an effort to sustain their career. They use these funds to buy votes, to sponsor pork-barrel projects and to nurture other tit-for-tat relationships as a means to strengthen their local power base and enhance their chances for re-election (Dinnen, 2001, p 173; Okole, 2003, p 58). These distributive activities, which only benefit a small

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<sup>51</sup> There are a few exceptions, such as East New Britain and North Solomons, where MPs do transfer their funds to the districts (Standish, 2007, p 149; Okole, 2003, p 54).



minority, mean that for many highlanders the word development remains unknown as politicians have greatly undermined the capacity of provincial governments by reducing the funds available for services.

Standish (2006, p 204) argues that the weaker the provincial governments become, the more central the role of the MPs becomes, and the more intense and ultimately destructive the political competition for their position. These funds provide a real incentive for gaining political office, inspiring more and more candidates to stand. During the 2002 elections, more than 1000 candidates contested the 39 Highlands seats (*Post-Courier*, 16 April 2002, p 2). This intense political competition has further been facilitated by the first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system<sup>52</sup>, which provided an opportunity for candidates to gain elections with a relatively small proportion of the overall vote<sup>53</sup>. The low thresholds required for victory have to a large extent encouraged electoral violence (Reilly, 2002c, p 250; Okole, 2002, p 37). In their pursuit of maximising votes, rival candidates readily resort to all sorts of illegal activities. Additionally, it can also be argued that the “growing primacy of politics” as a means of economic development (Dinnen, 2001, p 170) has also increased inter-tribal tensions and violence as those who are left out feel neglected and frustrated.

By using Rotberg’ hierarchy of political goods, human security, the opportunity to vote and service delivery, this chapter has attempted to answer how the weak

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<sup>52</sup> In the 1964, 1968 and 1972 elections for the House of Assembly PNG used the optional preferential voting (OPV) system. FPTP, which was introduced into the constitution in 1975, was last used during the 2002 elections. Future elections, including the coming-up 2007 elections, will be conducted under the limited preferential voting (LPV) system (Reilly, 2002c, pp 239-252).

<sup>53</sup> In 2002, there was only one candidate who acquired more than a 50 per cent majority vote. In general, successful candidates won with a median of 16 per cent. However, some MPs won with only 7 per cent of the votes from their constituency (Okole, 2002, p 37; Baker, 2005, p 100).

capacity of the PNG state provided for the continuing environment of election-related violence in the Highlands region. The 2002 Highlands election is a testimony that the state lacks the ability to deliver all three political goods defined by Rotberg to its citizens, subsequently undermining the social contract between the people and the state. Unless appropriate measures are taken to strengthen the political institutions, elections will be marred by violence further eroding the legitimacy of the PNG state.

## Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to examine how aspects of ethnic conflict theory and weak state theory are useful in explaining election-related violence in Papua New Guinea. The significance of this aim is to highlight that a comprehensive explanation of election-related violence necessitates an integrated multi-disciplinary and multi-theoretical perspective. Election-related fighting is one dimension of internal conflict, which since the end of the Cold War has become a destabilising feature affecting many developing nations. Although attempts have been made to define what constitutes election-related violence, theoretical explanations of the phenomenon seem to be missing in the social sciences.

Fighting that flares up around election times is a significant public order problem that requires attention and subsequently appropriate actions, especially in the light of the preoccupation of the Western world to assist developing nations to establish and consolidate well-functioning democratic states in an effort to create and maintain regional stability. Election-related violence has two serious implications for the health and viability of democracy. Firstly, it has a strong potential to erode the legitimacy of the state as it suggests that those in power, or at least some of them, are elected by the use of force rather than by the collective will of a constituency. Secondly, election-related violence, as a form of internal conflict, can pose a threat to the stability of already fragile nation-states by further destabilising internal security, which is an essential requirement for democracy.

Election-related violence has not emerged in a vacuum. It is primarily the product of the constellation of historical, cultural, sociological and political factors. Thus,

it follows that election-related violence is a complex phenomenon that cannot be adequately analysed by a single disciplinary or theoretical perspective. It requires a multi-theoretical and multi-disciplinary approach, which needs to be tailored to a specific country in question.

The analytical focus of this thesis has centred on one specific country of the South Pacific, Papua New Guinea. The country, which is situated at Australia's doorstep, is among many developing nations experiencing political instability. This political instability partly results from ongoing fighting, which has intensified during election times. Election-related violence is especially disturbing in one particular region of PNG, the Highlands. Tribal fighting in the PNG Highlands is deeply rooted in historical and cultural practices. It was exactly these traditional customs, which have interacted with the process of democratisation to produce election-related violence.

In an attempt to conceptualise election-related violence from a multi-theoretical perspective, this thesis applied ethnic conflict theory and weak state theory to the 2002 elections in the Highlands region in order to analyse those sociological and political factors that exacerbate conflict. Owing to the unique social structure and traditional practices, ethnic conflict theory has been limited to the examination of primordialism and modernisation. The analytical focus of this thesis has been built on the meta-theories of Clifford Geertz, Robert H. Bates, Donald L. Horowitz and Robert I. Rotberg. While none aims to specifically address election-related violence, each of the meta-theories purports to explain different dimensions of inter-group conflict. Consequently, the arguments presented by these prominent

social scientists have considerable merit in terms of explaining election-related violence. But, at the same time, the analysis of the 2002 Highlands election also reveals some shortcomings of their explanatory power. An assessment of the usefulness of ethnic conflict theory and weak state theory is summarised next.

The primordial approach proposed by Clifford Geertz has been a useful analytical tool in highlighting the importance and endurance of kinship affiliations in post-colonial Highlands' societies. It has also been helpful to identify the psychological sources of conflict, which are motivated by the desire to achieve relative group worth. This is particularly relevant to PNG, especially in the Highlands, where collective identity and the prestigious status of groups have a primacy for many people. In the electoral context, group solidarity is manifested through block voting practices and the defence of a candidate's base vote area. These corporate activities serve to enhance the chance of a clan member to win elections. Groups enter into competition because having one's member elected in parliament gives a superior status to the group compared to other groups.

However, the primordial approach has a number of shortcomings, consequently it lacks the capacity to adequately explain election-related violence. The emphasis given to primordial attachments implies in-group cooperation versus inter-group hostility. Yet, the analysis of the 2002 Highlands election revealed that group unity has been breaking down as fighting occurs not only between groups, but also within the group. Also, while primordialism captures the strength and non-rational character of social ties, it pays no attention to the material expectations of groups and to the role of elites in the mobilization and manipulation of collective

identity, which play an equally important role in election-related violence. These deficiencies have been addressed by modernisation theorists, hence the importance of incorporating their argument into the analysis.

In contrast to the primordial approach, modernisation theories seek to explain conflict according to a rational choice analysis. Modernisation theories have proven to be constructive in understanding election-related violence in material terms. It can be argued that Robert Bates's theory of political competition over the benefits generated by modernity is highly relevant in the Highlands. In accordance with Bates's argument, it is the aspiration of candidates either to retain or obtain power coupled with the aspiration of groups to gain access to various government funds, which results in conflict. In the competition for power, Highlands politicians use patronage politics played out with state resources as an instrument to mobilise support and gain re-election. The unequal distribution of goods and services is a source of anger and frustration, which inevitably leads to the fractionalisation between groups within the same electorate.

Although Horowitz criticised modernisation theories for paying undue attention to elite ambitions, it can be argued that Bates's theory pays insufficient attention to the elite because it lacks the capacity to explain why, in the competition for power, elites even resort to violence against members of their own groups. In the Highlands, vote-buying practices are frequently employed by those with political aspirations. The large amount of money being invested in elections can trigger retaliation as well as the intimidation of voters. Similarly to primordialism, modernisation theory also falls short in explaining election-related violence.

Despite their limitations, the two aspects of ethnic conflict theory provide valuable insights into conflict motives. However, the apparent lack of consensus between the two approaches weakens their explanatory power. Whilst Bates contributed paramount importance to the material interpretation of conflict over Geertz's primordial approach, Horowitz favoured the realm of collective feeling over the realm of material interest. It is important to note that both principles are equally at work and they complement one another. The analysis of the 2002 Highlands elections has revealed that election-related violence results not only from the desire to elevate the status of the group, but also from the rational pursuit of benefits. Therefore, a conclusion can be reached that each of the theories is insufficient in isolation. It is the combination of the two perspectives that provides a more inclusive rationalization of sociological aspects of election-related violence.

The analysis of the 2002 Highlands elections highlights the role played by institutional constraints in election-related violence. This follows that besides sociological factors, political aspects also need to be considered when discussing conflict. By incorporating ethnic party politics into his paradigm, it was Donald Horowitz, who came closest to assessing the role of the state in conflictual group relationships. In the case of PNG, where the party system is inherently weak and parties do not form around ethnic groups, Horowitz's argument does have shortcomings. For instance, PNG's party system points to the broader problem of weak state capacities, which is a significant reason behind election-related violence.

Robert Rotberg's three criteria for the effective functioning of nation-states, human security, the opportunity for political participation and social services, has been a valuable tool with which to examine how the weak capacities of the PNG state contribute to election-related violence. Although the state lacks the capacity to provide all three political goods, what has become apparent in the analysis is that it is primarily the lack of the most important political good, human security, which allows for increased violence. The high number of election-related casualties in the Highlands in 2002 is a testimony that the PNG state is unable to provide a secure environment for its citizens to live. Inadequate police presence and ineffective judicial arrangements provide for the continuing environment of conflict. These shortcomings of the state have been present since the early 1970s. Just as they facilitated the resurgence of warfare at the end of the colonial era, they now contribute to the intensification of election-related violence.

Whilst Rotberg emphasises the importance of political goods in the establishment of the social contract, which is at the heart of state-society interactions, he appears to underestimate the underlying cultural constraints facing governments in weak states. In PNG, the weak traditions of civil politics foster the endurance of kinship affiliations. People maintain their loyalty to their kinship groupings, because they find their emotional, physical and material security within their primordial communities.

Primordialism, modernisation theory and weak state theory all make a considerable contribution to the understanding of how various social and political factors contribute to election-related violence. However, as meta-theories each is



limited to explaining the specific dimension of election-related violence in PNG. Their differing assumptions give them partial explanatory power. Aspects of violence cannot be examined in isolation. A comprehensive explanation of election-related violence demands a synthesis that brings together the historical, cultural, sociological and political factors. Given that each country has a different history and unique cultural practices, an assessment of election-related violence can only be fully effective if it is case specific. Elections are at the heart of any democracy. The analysis of the debacle of the 2002 elections in the Highlands stresses a need for electoral conflict prevention policies if democracy is to be strengthened in PNG. These policies can only be responsive if they tackle the problem through an overarching approach, which is yet to be developed.

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*National*, 2 July 2002, p 9 'Are we going to Africa way?'

*National*, 4 July 2002, p 2 'Two killed in Enga poll violence'

*National*, 10 July 2002, p 1 'Army called out. SHP declared 'fighting zone'

*National*, 18 July 2002, p 8 'SHP people have gone mad'

*Post-Courier*, 28 March 2002, p 22 'Elections start next Thursday'

*Post-Courier*, 4 April 2002, p 1 'PM blocks poll start'

*Post-Courier*, 8 April 2002, p 1 'Court throws out poll query'

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*Post-Courier*, 16 April 2002, p 2 'Over 1000 likely to contest Highlands region's 39 seats'

*Post-courier*, 18 April 2002, p 2 'Kuli's supporters hit back'

*Post-courier*, 24 April 2002, p 5 'Police will be swift and assertive'

*Post-Courier*, 30 April 2002, p 2 'MP resigns to avoid charges'

*Post-Courier*, 1 May 2002, p 6 'Kundiawa out of drugs'

*Post-Courier*, 1 May 2002, p 19 'Measles epidemic aftermath'

*Post-Courier*, 8 May 2002, p 27 'Leaders accused of supplying arms'

*Post-Courier*, 10 May 2002, p 11 'The real costs of development failure'

*Post-Courier*, 20 May 2002, p 1 'Hostages taken in SHP poll campaign trail'

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*Post-Courier*, 6 June 2002, p 5 'More election petitions predicted'

*Post-Courier*, 7 June 2002, p 4 'Go for people in parties – PM'

*Post-Courier*, 11 June 2002, p 1 'K4m for polls diverted'

*Post-Courier*, 14 June 2002, p 1 'Two regions in polling doubt'

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*Post-Courier*, 19 June 2002, p 1 'Poll chaos: two dead in Hagen'

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*Post-Courier*, 19 June 2002, p 11 'Politics, power and corruption'

*Post-Courier*, 20 June 2002, p 1 'Plea: stop poll or it's civil war'

*Post-Courier*, 21 June 2002, p 1 'Officers forced to sign papers by armed men'

*Post-Courier*, 24 June 2002, p 3 'Highlands death toll reaches nine'

*Post-Courier*, 2 July 2002, p 3 'Four more dead in election violence'

*Post-Courier*, 4 July 2002, p 1 'Alert for poll Dirty Dozen'

*Post-Courier*, 4 July 2002, p 3 'Police took sides'

*Post-Courier*, 5 July 2002, p 2 'SHP polls today'

*Post-Courier*, 10 July 2002, p 1 'Army callout'

*Post-Courier*, 11 July 2002, p 3 'Four shot dead in Southern Highlands'

*Post-Courier*, 12 July 2002 p 1 'Armed policemen 'rise up' over pay'

*Post-Courier*, 12 July 2002 p 3 'Enga ballots bombed'

*Post-Courier*, 18 July 2002, p 2 'Guns 'affordable' in Highlands'

*Post-Courier*, 18 July 2002, p 4 'Chimbu count suspended'

*Post-Courier*, 26 July 2002, pp 1-2 '"Taliban' polls'

*Post-Courier*, 1 August 2002, pp 12-16 'Facts and figures of general election'

*Post-Courier*, 02 August 2002, 'Elections worst and darkest'

*Post-Courier*, 02 August 2002, p 2 'New elections for six SHP seats'

*Post-Courier*, 02 August 2002, p 11 'Some election facts'

*Post-Courier*, 9 August 2002, p 2 'Poll frustrations lead to calls for secession'

*Post-Courier*, 12 September 2002, p 11 'PNG's national security under serious threat'

*Post-Courier*, 19 September 2002, p 5 'SHP has more guns than B'ville: Barter'

*Post-Courier*, 21 October 2002, p 1 'Thieves – Barter'

## Appendix A - Seats won by party endorsed candidates, 2002

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Party	Number of winners declared
National Alliance Party	19
People's Democratic Movement	12
People's Progress Party	8
Papua and Niugini Union Party (Pangu)	6
People's Action Party	5
People's Labour Party	4
Christian Democratic Party	3
Melanesian Alliance Party	3
Papua New Guinea National Party	3
United Party	3
Nation Transformation Party	2
Pan Melanesian Congress Party	2
People's National Congress Party	2
People's Solidarity Party	2
Pipol First Party	2
Rural Pipol's Pati	2
Advance PNG Party	1
National Vision for Humanity Party	1
One People Party	1
PNG Country Party	1
PNG First Party	1
PNG Labour Party	1
PNG Revival Party	1
United Resources Party	1
Independent	17

Source: PNGEC (2006, online).

## Appendix B - Endorsed winning candidates by political party in the Highlands

<b>Electorates</b>	<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Party</b>
<b><u>Chimbu Provincial</u></b>	Louis Ambane	National Alliance Party
Chuave Open	David Ango	Nation Transformation Party
Gumine Open	Nick K Kuman	Independent
Karimui-Nomane Open	Posi Menaz	Independent
Kerowagi Open	Alphonse M Willie	National Alliance Party
Kundiawa Open	Mathew N Siune	People's Democratic Movement
Sinasina-Yonggamugl Open	Jeffery Nape	National Alliance Party
<b><u>Eastern Highlands Provincial</u></b>	Malcolm S Kela	Independent
Daulo Open	Ben M Kiagi	United Party
Goroka Open	Bire Kimisopa	United Party
Henganofi Open	Tota B Bun	Christian Democratic Party
Kainantu Open	Yuntuvi Bao	People's Labour Party
Lufa Open	Yawa Silupa	National Alliance Party
Obura-Wonenara Open	John Koigiri	People's Solidarity Party
Okapa Open	Tom Amukele	Pipol First Party
Unggai-Bena Open	Benny T Allan	Independent
<b><u>Enga Province</u></b>	Peter Ipatas	People's Democratic Movement
Lagaip-Porgera Open	Yarka Kappa	Independent
Kandep Open	Don P Pullie Polye	National Alliance Party
Kompiani-Ambum Open	Dickson M Maki	PNG Country Party
Wabag Open	Samuel T Abal	People's Democratic Movement
Wapenamanda Open	Yangakun M Kaeok	People's Labour Party
<b><u>Southern Highlands Provincial</u></b>		Failed
Kagua-Erave Open		Failed
Komo-Magarina Open		Failed
Koroba-Lake Kopiago		Failed
Ialibu-Pangia Open	Peter O'Neill	People's Solidarity Party
Imbonggu Open		Failed
Mendi Open	Michael B Nali	People's Progress Party
Nipa-Kutubu Open	Robert Kopaol	People's Progress Party
Tari Open		Failed
<b><u>Western Highlands Provincial</u></b>	Paias Wingti	People's Democratic Movement
Angalimp-South Wahgi Open	Paul W Wai	Christian Democratic Party
Dei Open	Melchior Pep	PNG National Party
Baiyer-Mul Open	Kuri Kingal	Independent
Hagen Open	William Duma	Independent
Jimi Open	Francis K Kinde	PNG National Party
North Wahgi Open	Michael M Kal	PNG National Party
Tambul-Nebilyer Open	Mark S Anis	Christian Democratic Party

Sources: PNGEC, 2007, online; *Post-Courier*, 1 August 2002, pp 12-16.

## Appendix C - Coalition governments since 1972

Year	Prime Minister	Deputy Prime Minister	Reason for change
1972	Michael Somare (Pangu)	Julius Chan (PPP)	National elections
1977	Michael Somare (Pangu)	Julius Chan (PPP)	National elections
1980	Julius Chan (PPP)	Iambakey Okuk (NP)	No-confidence vote
1982	Michael Somare (Pangu)	Paias Wingti (PDM)	National elections
1985	Paias Wingti (PDM)	Julius Chan (PPP)	No-confidence vote
1987	Paias Wingti (PDM)	Julius Chan (PPP)	National elections
1988	Rabbie Namaliu (Pangu)	Ted Diro (PAP)	No-confidence vote
1992	Paias Wingti (PDM)	Julius Chan (PPP)	National elections
1994	Julius Chan (PPP)	Chris Haiveta (Pangu)	Court ousted PM
1997	Bill Skates (PNC)	Chris Haiveta (Pangu)	National elections
1999	Mekere Morauta (PDM)	John Pundari (PAP)	PM resigned
2002	Michael Somare (NA)	Allan Marat (PPP)	National elections

Note: From 1972 the government leader Michael Somare was Chief Minister, and at Independence in 1975 the same coalition continued in office with Somare and Chan as Prime Minister and Deputy.

Key: Pangu = Pangu Pati; PPP = People's Progress Party; NP = National Party; NA = National Alliance; PDM = People's Democratic Movement; PAP = People's Action Party; PNC = People's National Congress

Source: Okole (2002).

## Appendix D - Census (18 years & older), Common Roll and Vote Analysis by Province

Region	Province	2000 Census 18+	2002 Vote	Ratio
Southern	Western	75 403	63 739	84.53%
Southern	Gulf	52 535	47 000	89.46%
Southern	Central	94 609	94 583	99.97%
Southern	NCD	149 834	82 725	55.21%
Southern	Milne Bay	110 085	87 967	79.91%
Southern	Northern	66 666	61 295	91.94%
Highlands	Southern Highlands	300 654	n/a	n/a*
Highlands	Enga	169 258	326 842	193.10%
Highlands	Western Highlands	253 984	399 901	157.45%
Highlands	Chimbu	155 475	442 680	284.73%
Highlands	Eastern Highlands	239 869	417 498	174.05%
Momase	Morobe	289 225	212 601	73.51%
Momase	Madang	181 604	152 919	84.20%
Momase	East Sepik	170 935	159 757	93.46%
Momase	West Sepik	92 696	84 534	91.19%
Islands	Manus	22 481	18 772	83.50%
Islands	New Ireland	60 354	45 158	74.82%
Islands	East New Britain	112 858	72 202	63.98%
Islands	West New Britain	92 949	67 733	72.87%
Islands	North Solomon	86 598	49 668	57.35%

\* The Electoral Commission failed the elections in six Southern Highlands electorates

Source: PNGEC (2003).



## Appendix E - Comparison of the 1997 and 2002 vote in the Highlands Provinces

Province	1997 Vote	2002 vote	Ratio
Southern Highlands	296 488	n/a	n/a
Enga	207 868	326 842	57.24%
Western Highlands	233 463	399 901	71.29%
Chimbu	239 895	442 680	84.53%
Eastern Highlands	221 818	417 498	88.22%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 199 532</b>	<b>1 586 921</b>	<b>75.73%</b>

Note: There might be variations in the total increase figure due to the lack of data in SHP.

Source: PNGEC (2003).